

1997-1998 BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS PROGRAM

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Part III - Summary

Prior to 1965, the area served by Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois was part of a much larger high school district. When the decision was made to build this suburban Chicago high school, the largest population center of the district voted to secede rather than send their children to what was then considered an inferior school. Thus, when Stevenson opened as the only school in a newly formed high school district, it seemed to be the school no one wanted to attend. As the superintendent acknowledged in the dedication of this new school, Stevenson High School was “born of conflict and nurtured by adversity.” The conflict and adversity continued through much of the school’s early history. Community dissension in the mid-1970’s led to antagonism on the Board of Education, the dismissal of the superintendent, and the mid-year resignation of the principal. Three different individuals served as superintendent within a four-year period. In the early 1980’s the community rejected a referendum to enlarge the school, and representatives of yet another population center began a drive to detach themselves from Stevenson. Yet, in the last ten years, no public high school in Illinois has garnered more national awards or been as widely celebrated. During the past decade Stevenson became the state’s first high school to win the USDE Excellence in Education Award a second time and was one of only three to be named as one on America’s Best High Schools each time that Redbook Magazine presented the award. The school has been featured in numerous professional journals and has hosted visitors from hundreds of schools throughout the United States as well as schools from Japan, Canada, Singapore, and Europe.

The transformation that has occurred at Stevenson High School represents the collective effort of hundreds of people who have pursued a shared vision of how an exemplary school should operate. In 1983 representatives of the Board of Education, staff, administration, community, and students began a series of discussions on the characteristics of an excellent school and the steps Stevenson might take to become such a school. That discussion led to consensus and the adoption of the school’s first vision statement. This process was repeated in 1990 and again in 1996. Each new vision statement led to analysis of discrepancies between the characteristics described in the school and the actual conditions that were present. This analysis, in turn, led to constantly evolving strategic plans to improve the school.

Key factors that have contributed to Stevenson’s advancement include:

A Philosophy of Success for Every Student. Prior to the adoption of its first vision statement, Stevenson was committed to the practice of sorting and selecting students. The school operated within a structure of five different ability levels and defined its task as assigning students to the appropriate level rather than ensuring that all students learned at high levels. This practice was contrary to a vision statement that called for success for all students. Gradually the school began to reduce its reliance on tracking and developed strong student support systems to enable students to achieve the goals of a demanding curriculum. The willingness of teachers to redefine their tasks from sorting students to teaching students and the effectiveness of the school’s student support system have been instrumental in the transformation of the school.

A Collaborative Culture. The basic building block of Stevenson’s learning community is the collaborative team. Teachers work together in course-specific curriculum teams that are empowered to make every significant instructional decision - what is to be taught (curriculum content), how it is to be taught (instructional strategies), when it is to be taught (pacing and sequencing), materials with which it is taught (textbooks and supplementary materials), and how students will demonstrate mastery (assessment). Teachers analyze student achievement, identify areas of concern, develop strategies for improvement, and pursue professional development initiatives - all as a team. Members of the Student Services Department

work together in teams of three to monitor the success of each student and to enhance student support systems. The administration works as a joint leadership team that meets daily. To be a member of the staff of Stevenson is to be a member of a collaborative team. The opportunity to work and learn together is embedded into the culture and daily life of the school.

A Results Orientation. The results orientation of the school enables its members to stay focused on the achievement of Stevenson students. In every course teachers analyze their student achievement on locally developed common, comprehensive assessments as part of the school's standard procedures. The principal and directors analyze student performance on state and national tests each year. The school conducts a telephone survey of a random sample of students one year and five years after they have graduated to determine their levels of success and their perceptions of the preparation they received in high school. One question drives the analysis of this data: "What can we do to improve the results we are achieving?" This constant focus on results and the steadily improving performance that it has produced helped to identify Stevenson as a model school in the 1996 book, Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement.

Effective Partnerships. Stevenson has been committed to establishing effective partnerships with sender districts, parents, community organizations, and area businesses. It has established articulation committees in each subject area that have identified both what students should know and be able to do as they enter high school and assessment strategies to determine the proficiencies of each student. The school advises parents of their student's progress every three weeks and has developed a series of strategies to keep parents informed and involved. A foundation has been formed to forge a strong link between the school and the community, and the school and its facilities function as a year-round community center that serves people of all ages. Stevenson has also initiated school-business partnerships that provide students with the opportunity to explore careers that are of interest to them.

Recognition of the Importance of People. Stevenson operates from the premise that people are the only source of improvement and renewal for any school. The key to school improvement is not programs and projects, but people. As a result of this belief the school is aggressive and proactive in recruiting candidates for positions. It utilizes a thorough selection process that calls upon candidates to demonstrate effectiveness in the classroom rather than glibness in an interview. It provides each new employee with a mentor, ongoing orientation, and a support system. Finally, it offers job-embedded professional development that fosters the continued growth and learning of all staff members. The story of Stevenson's success is the story of its people and their tremendous work ethic.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement. Despite the many awards that it has won, Stevenson continues to be characterized by the constant search for a better way and a perpetual disquiet with present levels of achievement. Continuous improvement processes are built into curriculum monitoring, evaluation procedures, and individualized professional development plans. It has responded to a huge increase in enrollment by launching over 25 improvement task forces in the past six years, completely revamped its structure with the move to houses, and dramatically expanded its co-curricular program. It has refused to stand pat.

When Stevenson won its second Excellence in Education Award in 1991, the site visitor from the United States Department of Education wrote: "The combination of dedicated personnel and the emphasis on success combine to make this one of the best schools I have ever visited." While we took some measure of satisfaction in this conclusion, the 1997 application for the Blue Ribbon Award presents compelling evidence that Stevenson has improved significantly in virtually every indicator of effectiveness since that

time. If the members of the 1991 visitation team were to return to Stevenson today, they would see that much has changed and that students are more successful than ever. But they would also see that the central elements of the Stevenson culture they witnessed in 1991 - shared vision, commitment to success for all students, collaborative teams, a focus on people, and a results orientation - continue to serve as the foundation of the school today.

Part IV - Vision Statement

The vision statement of Stevenson High School was initially drafted in 1983, was revised in 1990, and was revised yet again in 1996. The statement includes a preface and six major headings. Each major heading is followed by more specific indicators that serve as benchmarks for the school. The preface and headings are presented in their entirety. The specific indicators are listed only under curriculum in order to illustrate the format of the vision statement. Other indicators cannot be included due to the limits of space.

“If Stevenson High School is to be an exemplary school, it must have a clear sense of the goals that it is trying to accomplish, the characteristics of the school it seeks to become, and the contributions that the various stakeholders in the school must make in order to transform ideals into reality. The following vision statement is intended to provide the standards that Stevenson High School should strive to maintain.

I. Curriculum

An exemplary school provides students with a common core curriculum complemented with a variety of elective courses and co-curricular activities. This balanced program stimulates intellectual curiosity, requires students to demonstrate that they have learned how to learn, and enables them to become productive and effective citizens. The school articulates the outcomes it seeks for all of its students and monitors each student’s attainment of those outcomes through a variety of indicators. In such a school the curriculum:

- A. addresses mastery of academic content which integrates acquisition of essential life skills.
- B. enables students to broaden their perspective in order to understand and appreciate diverse cultures within the school as well as cultures and conditions beyond those of their local community.
- C. stimulates active engagement on the part of students.
- D. recognizes and provides for individual differences and interests.
- E. integrates technology as a means to achieve specific curricular outcomes.
- F. reflects the district's support of innovation and commitment to continuous improvement.

II. Attention to Individual Students

Regardless of its size, an exemplary school recognizes the importance of each individual student. Those within the school make a concerted effort to communicate and demonstrate their concern for each student. As a result, each student feels that he or she is valued as a member of the school community...

III. Personnel

An exemplary school operates on the premise that a school can only be as good as the personnel that it employs. Therefore, the Board and administration are committed to recruiting and retaining individuals with exceptional expertise in their respective fields...

IV. Students

In the final analysis, the effectiveness of any school is assessed on the basis of the conduct, character, and achievement of its students...

V. Climate

An exemplary school provides a warm, inviting climate that enables students to enjoy their high school experience and results in a shared sense of pride in the school...

VI. Community Partnership

An exemplary school recognizes the importance of establishing effective partnerships with the larger community - parents, residents, businesses, government agencies, and other educational systems. It strives to develop the community's allegiance to and ownership in the school..."

Part V - Learning-Centered Schools Criteria

A1. What are the goals for and needs of your students? How does your school develop and maintain awareness of student goals and needs, taking into consideration the most significant dimensions of student diversity?

General academic goals for each student have been identified in Board policy and translated into specific outcomes for each course in the curriculum. These goals and outcomes have been examined in light of the academic content standards recently adopted by the state of Illinois. While the need for conciseness in this report prohibits the listing of these goals and outcomes, their spirit is captured in a slogan that is pervasive throughout the school - "success for every student." That slogan represents more than rhetoric. A collaborative effort of community members and staff has resulted in the articulation of the characteristics of a successful student and the indicators that the school will monitor to promote the success of each student entrusted to it.

Within the past eighteen months, the general goals of the school have also been reviewed by a Strategic Planning Task Force that included representatives of the community, staff, administration, and students. This task force considered a history of the school; relevant financial, enrollment, and demographic data; vision statements for the school that had been developed in 1983 and revised in 1990; external and internal factors impacting the school; findings of visitation teams that had evaluated the school for accreditation purposes; longitudinal achievement data; results of surveys of students, graduates, and parents; research summaries on effective schools; readings on national demographic trends, and recommendations from various commissions on school reform. The task force also reviewed the national educational goals articulated in Goals 2000 and the recommendations of the SCANS Report, What Work Requires of Schools. As a result of this extensive effort, the task force: (1) recommended the continued support of the traditional curricular goals that had been identified for students, and (2) identified new priorities for student learning. These new goals call for graduates who: use technology effectively; appreciate diversity; function as independent learners; identify, define, and solve problems; establish, pursue and achieve goals; and accept responsibility for their success.

The recommendations of the task force were reviewed by the faculty and adopted by the Board of Education. They now represent a driving force in Stevenson's improvement initiatives for 1997-98. Providing students with the knowledge and skills essential to success in college is a priority for the school and its community because almost 95% of Stevenson's graduates elect to pursue higher education. There is general agreement, however, that all students need the skills identified above regardless of their post high school plans.

Every student who enters Stevenson develops a four-year plan designed to address his or her personal goals and needs. They review this plan at regular intervals with their counselor. Furthermore, the progress that each student is making toward the achievement of his or her personal four-year plan is monitored closely,

and an extensive support system is enacted whenever there is an indication that the student requires additional help in order to achieve the goals. In short, the school responds to the diverse needs of students by clarifying the goals and carefully monitoring the progress of each student, and then initiating the support that is necessary to help the student succeed.

For further information on meeting the diverse needs of students, see A3 and B6.

A2. How does your school determine and address the developmental needs of students as they move through the school?

Although Stevenson is an independent high school district, it has established ongoing articulation committees in each content area with all of the six independent school districts that send students to Stevenson. This collaborative effort has enabled the districts to specify what students should know and be able to do as they leave eighth grade. Furthermore, Stevenson and its sender districts have worked together to develop common proficiency examinations that are used to place each student in courses at the high school that are developmentally appropriate. Eighth graders take the examinations in January, and then an extensive orientation program to high school begins.

February: All incoming students and their parents are invited to Stevenson for a general orientation to high school and an overview of curricular and co-curricular opportunities.

March: Stevenson counselors arrange a private meeting with each eighth grader and his or her parents to discuss the student's placement; identify co-curricular activities that may interest the student; offer suggestions for summer school; help the student develop written goals; and answer any questions.

May: Stevenson's counselors visit their counterparts in each junior high school to identify students who may have some trouble adjusting to high school. These meetings generate a "Counselor Watch" list of students who may need personal attention and extra help in the first weeks of school. The Special Education Department also schedules orientation meetings throughout the year for special education parents and their students to address any questions or concerns they may have about high school. Students are also invited to return to Stevenson for the Co-Curricular Fair that introduces students to the myriad of opportunities offered by the co-curricular program. During the summer, students receive a follow-up letter inviting them to join any activity in which they have expressed an interest.

June and July: Stevenson offers a wide array of summer school offerings and encourages incoming students to take a course as an introduction to high school work. Sixty-seven percent of the entering freshman class enrolls in the summer program. One course, "Survival Skills for High School," is offered to incoming freshmen who have been identified by junior high schools as having potential problems making the transition to high school.

August: The incoming freshmen spend one day in school before the balance of the student body arrives. Over two hundred upperclassmen serve as their tour guides, help them with registration, and answer their questions.

August-June: Freshmen report to an advisory period four days each week throughout the school year where a faculty advisor helps them with their orientation to high school. Two upperclassmen are also assigned to each advisory and sacrifice half of their lunch period each day to serve as mentors to the freshmen. All students assigned to a particular advisory have the same counselor, and counselors visit their students at least once each week. Every three weeks the advisor and counselor receive progress reports or report cards on their students and hold individual conferences with each student.

Many parents and students are concerned as their child enters a large comprehensive high school that he or she may "fall through the cracks." Stevenson's support system prevents that phenomenon. The grading system that provides every student with a report card or progress report every three weeks means that a student who is not performing well will likely receive offers of assistance from his teacher, his advisor, a

mentor, and his counselor. As one student observed, “ You can’t slide here. Get a bad grade and they triple team you.” A similar support system is in place for transfer students.

Stevenson attempts to provide developmentally appropriate autonomy for its students by providing them with gradually increasing freedom and responsibility as they advance through school (see D5).

The transition from high school to college represents another significant event in the life of a teenager. To assist students with that transition, Stevenson provides an extensive college counseling program that is developmental, commencing sophomore year and continuing through graduation; family-focused with both parents and students invited to attend each program; and transitional, focusing on the college preparatory nature of the Stevenson experience and teaching students to build on their experiences as they make post-secondary decisions.

The college consultants host a monthly open house in our College Resource Center where families can utilize the many post-secondary resources that are available. In the sophomore year they host the College Information Evening, a program that discusses the college search and selection process from the viewpoints of both a large public and small private university. The Deans of Admission from two universities speak and answer questions from the audience. In the junior year counselors initiate the three phased, Countdown to College Program. The first phase, entitled “Making the Most of Sixth Semester,” presents specific information about the college selection process including standardized testing, the importance of the student’s academic record, and factors which should be considered in the selection process. Each family receives a copy of Stevenson’s fifty-page college counseling manual. In the second phase, counselors meet with their students’ parents in small groups to discuss the application process along with student/parent/counselor responsibilities in the college search. In the third phase counselors arrange individual appointments with families to develop a list of specific colleges which meet a student’s needs. A separate post secondary program is also conducted for all special needs students in the junior year. In the senior year families are placed into mock admission committees and discuss actual applications to two popular colleges. Parents and students are advised of the methodology and procedures for applying for financial aid for college, and a special program is held to discuss social and emotional issues a family is likely to experience as a student leaves home to attend college.

A3. What non-academic services and programs are available to support students, and how do they relate to the student goals and needs identified in A1 and A2?

Stevenson’s “Pyramid of Intervention Strategies” for students experiencing difficulty has been featured at state and national conferences. Every student in the school is assigned to a student support team composed of a counselor, dean, and social worker. These individuals meet weekly to identify and discuss any student who is having academic, behavioral, or emotional problems. Initial interventions might include a conference between the counselor and student and then a phone call to parents. The counselor might recommend the student for the “Good Friend” Program, a program that solicits teacher volunteers to take a special interest in a student that is having trouble. If the problems persist, the counselor will schedule a conference with the student and the parent to discuss the matter and may initiate a weekly progress report that advises the student, counselor, and parent of the student’s progress each week. If the problems still persist the counselor may recommend that the student be assigned to the

Guided Study Program. This program removes students from a large study hall setting and assigns them to a group of no more than ten students who meet with a teacher one period each day. The teacher communicates with each student's teachers to identify upcoming assignments and then monitors the student to ensure that assignments are completed. The teacher also works to develop a relationship with the students that encourages them to establish goals for their high school experience. If the student continues to struggle, the student may be assigned to the Mentor Program. This is a two-period assignment to a program that includes no more than twelve students per hour. In the first period, the student is taught study skills and time management; and in the second period, the student completes homework assignments. If the Mentor Program is not successful in helping the student to achieve at satisfactory levels, the student support team will convene a staffing that includes the student, parents, and all of the student's teachers to discuss possible solutions. The group may decide to recommend the student for a case study evaluation to see if he or she is eligible for special education services.

The Student Services Department also provides support groups for students who may be experiencing difficulty. Last year fourteen different support groups were conducted on an ongoing basis.

Stevenson provides an extensive Student Substance Abuse Prevention Program with both prevention and intervention components. The prevention program educates and supports students in their decisions to remain chemically free. Educational units are included in health education, driver education, and science classes. Every student must demonstrate knowledge of the medical and legal consequences of drug and alcohol abuse, available student prevention programs, and resources for assistance within the community as a condition for graduation. The intervention program is in place to intervene if there is evidence that students have become involved with substance abuse. A team of staff members meets twice weekly to discuss concerns about students who are showing signs of escalating academic or behavior problems in order to propose an appropriate response. A full-time Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator also connects students and families with resources and assistance in the community.

A4. What co-curricular activities are available for students and how do they extend the academic curriculum?

One of Stevenson's major challenges as it has confronted tremendous growth was to ensure that students would continue to have the benefit of participation of co-curricular activities. In 1993, the Co-Curricular Task Force was formed to "develop recommendations to the Board for expanding student participation in the co-curricular program. The task force - which included administrators, coaches, faculty, parents, and students - adopted a purpose statement that called for high levels of student participation, equal access for all students, and responsiveness to students' interests and talents. It then presented sixteen recommendations to ensure that the levels of student participation would remain high as the school grew larger. The Board adopted these recommendations and created the position of Student Activities Coordinator to oversee this important aspect of the school's program. The results have been tremendous. Since Stevenson won the Blue Ribbon Award in 1991, it has created new athletic teams in lacrosse, volleyball, gymnastics, water polo, ice hockey, and golf and added 33 new athletic teams.

In 1997, the Patriots will field 33 different varsity squads and a total of 98 athletic teams. The Fine Arts Program has expanded dramatically (see J1). The school has also created 42 new clubs since 1991. Almost all of the new teams and activities have been created as a result of student initiatives, and a process is in place that allows any student to propose a new club. As a result of all these efforts, the percentage of students participating in the athletic program is higher today than at any time in the history of the school. Over 90% of the Class of 1996 reported that they were involved in clubs, activities, or athletics, and 94% reported that their experience was positive. Almost 70% of the graduating class participated in athletics while in high school. In the 1996-97 school year, 47% of the girls and 57% of the boys were members of athletic teams. While the opportunity to participate in some of these activities must be competitive due to space limitations or the nature of the activity, most are open to all students with an interest. Most sports are “no-cut” at the underclassman level; most fine arts programs are open to all students; and almost all clubs take any interested student. A 1997 survey of the freshman class revealed that the opportunity to participate in the co-curricular program was their favorite aspect of the school. There is **no** area of Stevenson’s curricular program that does not have a corresponding co-curricular activity to support it.

A5. How has your school demonstrated a commitment to addressing the accessibility of its facilities and programs to students with disabilities?

In the early 1980’s, ramps were constructed for exterior access to the upper and lower levels of the original school building. Bathrooms and locker rooms were remodeled to provide for handicap accessibility. The 1985 addition and remodeling project was designed in conformance with the Illinois Environmental Barriers Act and is fully accessible to the disabled. The 1995 addition is also fully accessible per the requirements of EBA and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The campus and facilities are accessible to the disabled beyond the requirements of the ADA. The district has even made provisions to provide students with a motorized scooter if they have difficulty in moving about the campus. Access to programs is addressed in B6 and D3.

B1. How does your curriculum serve the broad goals for student learning and development that the public generally expects education to achieve: personal and intellectual growth, citizenship, and preparation for work? What relative emphasis do you place on these goals in your curriculum?

The fact that 95% of its graduates pursue education beyond high school makes Stevenson a de facto college preparatory school (see B4 for percentages of students pursuing a core curriculum). Particularly noteworthy is the fact that in 1997, 328 students completed calculus, 561 completed physics, and 656 wrote Advanced Placement (AP) examinations. In 1983, Stevenson did not rank among the top fifty schools in the Midwest in terms of participation in the AP Program. By 1996, the school’s enrollment has increased by 93%, but the number of exams written by Stevenson students increased 1,026%. Today Stevenson ranks first in the thirteen-state Midwest region and ninth in the world in the AP Program; produces more AP Scholars than any school in the world; and has a mean score of 4.0 on the AP’s five-point rubric. The school is featured in the College Board’s Secondary School Guide to the Advanced Placement Program. It offers students a rigorous academic program.

Stevenson prepares students for citizenship by encouraging them to engage in the democratic process while they are enrolled in school. There are over 550 students who were active participants in Student Council and Class Boards in 1996-97. A member of the Student Council sits on the School Board as a non-voting member. Any student in the school can submit a proposal for changes in the rules of the school to Student Council and is guaranteed that the Council will give the proposal a hearing. The principal is obligated to

review any proposal endorsed by Student Council and to provide a written explanation if he does not endorse the proposal. Students have used this process to initiate major rule changes. The Student Leaders Advisory Council, which includes the presidents of clubs and captains of athletic teams, advises the administration of the student perspective and serves as a sounding board for ideas and concerns regarding the school. Student representatives have served on almost all task forces that have worked to improve the school, and students developed the guiding principles of the Stevenson Disciplinary Code. They function as mentors to underclassmen, as mediators in student conflict, and as leaders of the various clubs and activities that abound in the school. Over the past three years, more than half of the seniors have reported that they played a leadership role within the school.

Another important element of citizenship is service to the community, and Stevenson has made a conscious effort to create and facilitate opportunities for students to participate in community service. In the 1996-97 school year 1,149 Stevenson students contributed 36,449 hours to service projects. These figures represent only voluntary projects and do not include the thousands of hours donated by students to fulfill course requirements that specify community service. Students have done more than discuss character and service. They have demonstrated those attributes.

Stevenson prepares students for the workplace by ensuring that each graduate has the basic academic competencies cited in the SCANS Report (see B2). However, that same report has cited other important workplace competencies including the technology skills to acquire, organize, process, and evaluate information, and the interpersonal skills to work well with people from diverse backgrounds as a contributing member of a team. Stevenson has created initiatives to address each of these areas. Finally, one of the school's newest programs, the Career Exploration Opportunities Program, has been developed to provide students with career mentors, job shadowing, and internships in areas that are of interest to them (see G4).

B2. Successful schools offer all students opportunities to engage with significant content. How does your school ensure that students achieve at high levels in the core subject?

Stevenson teachers work collaboratively to identify the essential outcomes for each course in the school and to develop common, comprehensive assessments to determine each student's mastery of those outcomes. The teams work together to review student performance, identify problem areas, and develop strategies for improvement. Student achievement is also carefully monitored on state assessments and those students who fail to meet the state performance standards are required to receive additional tutorial assistance until they are able to do so. One of the most significant strategies that the school has used to ensure all students achieve at high levels is to eliminate remedial courses. In the core curriculum, students are assigned into traditional college preparatory courses, accelerated courses that prepare them for Advanced Placement courses, or Advanced Placement courses themselves. The only exception to this generalization is the students who have an individualized educational plan that calls for them to be assigned to self-contained special education classes.

The scope and sequence of the core curriculum is as follows:

English: All entering freshmen enroll either in standard/college prep or in accelerated Freshman English. Those reading below the eighth grade level may also enroll in Reading Enrichment, a one or two-semester course in reading and study skills. Sophomore English is similarly divided into two levels. At the end of tenth grade, accelerated level sophomores decide whether to take AP Junior English or accelerated. In 1996-97, it was almost a 50/50 split. The balance of the class, about 60% take college prep Junior

English. Seniors have the opportunity to choose among sixteen electives. These electives are offered at one of three levels - college prep, accelerated, or Advanced Placement (see C1 and C2).

Mathematics: The mathematics curriculum accommodates three levels of student readiness as they exit eighth grade: (1) students who have successfully completed a full year of algebra and a full year of advanced algebra; (2) students who have completed only a full year of algebra in eighth grade; and (3) students whose exiting course in the eighth grade is pre-algebra. Students successfully completing advanced algebra in the eighth grade move through a sequence that allows them to take Calculus BC as juniors and Calculus III, Linear Algebra, and Advanced Placement Statistics as seniors. Students who have successfully completed algebra in the eighth grade move through a sequence of courses that allows them to take Calculus AB during their senior year. Those who have completed pre-algebra in the eighth grade are allowed to move through a sequence of mathematics courses that allow them to complete either Pre-Calculus or Finite Math in the senior year. Evidence of the extreme success of this program is the single digit “D” and “F” rate that exists throughout all levels of the entire mathematics curriculum. Further evidence of the success of our programs is the 99.9% junior and 90% senior enrollment in a mathematics class. In addition, summer school courses in Algebra 1, Geometry 1, and Advanced Algebra 1 are provided so students can move within levels and take additional advanced courses regardless of their initial placement as ninth graders (see C1 and C2).

Science: The science curriculum includes courses at regular, accelerated, and AP (honors) levels. Offerings include: Natural Science 1 & 2, biology (3 courses), chemistry (4 courses), physics (4 courses), environmental science (2 courses), and human/comparative biology (2 semester courses). The sequencing of courses depends on individual student performance and progress. An important aspect of our sequencing is that students are not “locked” into one level. For example, a freshman who is very successful in regular level Natural Science 1 & 2 could move to Accelerated Biology as a sophomore (see C1 and C2).

During the past two years, the Science Division has focused on courses at the regular level. Team leaders in natural science, biology, chemistry, and physics are identifying concepts and essential skills that unify the regular level curriculum. Critical thinking is emphasized through the use of real-life problem solving and has become an inherent part of laboratory work. Technology has also become an integrating force throughout the science curriculum. During the past two years of staff development, science teachers have incorporated graphing calculators, CBLs, and computer simulations into student laboratory work.

Social Studies: All Stevenson High School students earn five credits in social studies prior to graduation and also complete an economics course taught through the Business Education Department. Each freshman takes a full-year world history course. During either the sophomore or junior year, students take a full year of United States History. This requirement can be met by selecting one of three options - American Studies (an interdisciplinary course thematically linked with American Literature), United States History (a survey course), or Advanced Placement United States History. During the junior or senior year, students must complete a semester course in American Government - either American Government or Advanced Placement American Government. In this core program, geographic literacy is integrated in the study of history as political, social, and economic themes are developed. Each experience builds upon the skills and information presented in the previous course(s). The elective program in social studies provides nine different courses in order to expand upon information and ideas presented in the core program.

Foreign Language: The Foreign Language Department offers first, second, third, and fourth year courses at the regular level in French, Spanish, and German, and fifth year courses at the accelerated level in French and Spanish. The second-year student who wishes to pursue a more rigorous study of these

languages may enroll in a four-year sequence of courses which will prepare the student to take the appropriate advanced placement language examination. The study of Hebrew as a foreign language was added to the curriculum this year and has attracted 46 students to Hebrew I.

The four basic skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing - as well as cultural awareness are addressed in all courses. Curriculum articulation among schools is achieved through twice-yearly articulation meetings with sender school foreign language teachers. High school teachers articulate curriculum through meetings with teams in the courses immediately preceding and following their own. Content integration occurs through collaboration with other faculty members in home economics, social studies, and art who bring their areas of expertise to foreign language students. One of the most effective features of the foreign language curriculum is the alternative assessment component of the final examinations. This component allows students to demonstrate their ability to communicate in the target language, whether it be through an oral interview, a skit, a video, a journal, a research project, or a portfolio.

Fine Arts: See J1a. for Arts Education.

B3. What other content areas play essential roles in your schoolwide curriculum goals?

The Technology Education Department has played a leadership role in advancing the school's goals because of its success in demonstrating applications of technology and developing workplace skills. A traditional drafting program has been transformed into a series of courses in computer-aided design. A once traditional printing program now offers desktop publishing, graphic arts, lithography, and production printing. An interactive multimedia course is one of the school's most popular new courses. Students from this department have garnered a long list of awards in regional competitions in their fields.

The Physical Welfare Department has led the school's effort to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and disposition essential to a healthy lifestyle. Students take physical welfare courses each year unless they receive an academic or athletic waiver as an upperclassman. The cornerstone of the program is a personal fitness assessment that is administered to each student several times each year. Every sophomore is taught CPR and has the opportunity to obtain CPR3 certification through the American Red Cross. Upperclassmen are able to elect one of four fitness tracks based upon their interests. Furthermore, two days each week students are free to choose from a variety of options such as swimming, step aerobics, volleyball, or weight training. The Physical Welfare Department has also instituted the full range of American Red Cross Certifications - from Basic Water Safety, to Lifeguarding, to Water Safety Instructor Aide.

B4. What are your course requirements for graduation? To what extent do your school and students within the school exceed minimum state and/or district requirements?

Graduation Requirements

<u>Subject</u>	<u>State Requirements</u>	<u>District Requirements</u>	<u>School Requirements</u>	<u>% 1997 Grads Who Exceed School Requirements</u>
English	Not Specified	7 Semesters	7 Semesters	84.2%
Mathematics	No Specified	4 Semesters	4 Semesters	96.2%
Science	2 Semesters	4 Semesters	4 Semesters	93.7%
	Biology			

Social Studies	2 Semesters	5 Semesters	5 Semesters	56.28%
	U.S. History			
Foreign Language	Not Specified	*	*	87.4%
The Arts	Not Specified	*	*	76.5%
Physical Education	8 Semesters	8 Semesters	8 Semesters	-----
Vocational/Technical	Not Specified	*	*	*
Computer Education	Not Specified	None	None	29.5%
Philosophy/Religion	Not Specified	None	None	None
Other (Specify)	1 Semester	1 Semester	1 Semester	53.7%
	Consumer Education	Economics	Economics	

*At least two semesters must come from these areas. Students in the Class of 1997 earned 853 credits in vocational, home economics, career education, business education, and technical education.

B5. What is the process for continuing curriculum renewal in your school? What questions about curriculum is your school currently addressing?

Changes in curriculum typically have evolved over a period of years under the leadership of a curriculum team leader and the teachers who make up the curriculum team.

Sophomore English: At the beginning of the decade, Sophomore English was a very traditional two-semester sequence which presented a chronological approach to American literature, from the founding fathers through the mid-1900's. This was coupled with instruction in composition, primarily expository essays about the literature being studied. In 1997-98, the literature content is still American, but the course is different in almost every other way. It is a much more thoroughly integrated language arts experience for the students, weaving together practice in all major modes of written expression with required speaking experiences, both formal and informal. The organization of the literature is now thematic rather than chronological. These units of study involve students in both creative and more traditional academic writing activities. Projects, presentations, and group reports have, in several instances, replaced more traditional examinations. The content has been skillfully organized into meaningful relationships which allow students to make connections among writers and to pursue ideas and concepts which are relevant to them. Students participate in goal setting every fall and in self-assessment and evaluation every spring. The semi-annual criterion-referenced tests no longer emphasize the recall of seemingly endless lists of facts and terms, but rather the actual application of critical and interpretative reading skills, one of the stated goals of the Communication Arts Department.

One of the most significant changes in Sophomore English since 1990-91 has been the elimination of all basic and modified level sections of the course. It was this change which precipitated many of the other changes noted in the preceding paragraph. If Sophomore English was to be an interesting and accessible course for ALL students, without diluting its academic value, material had to be presented in a way which appealed to students.

Mathematics: An area of the mathematics curriculum that best exemplifies our efforts at content improvement is the Calculus curriculum. In 1991, 102 out of 471 (22%) of the seniors took Calculus. Currently in the 1997-98 school year, 312 out of 762 students (41%) of the students take Calculus. In 1991, our Calculus curriculum consisted of Calculus BC at the honors level and Calculus AB at the accelerated level. In order to accommodate these increased numbers of students and appropriately meet their needs, we expanded Calculus AB so it could be taught at the honors level and increased its level of

expectation to better prepare students for the new rigors and demands that have been placed on the AB curriculum by the College Board. In addition, during the last two years, the Advanced Placement Calculus curriculum has increased emphasis on graphing calculator technology. Finally, we provided students with an alternative to Advanced Placement Calculus called Business Calculus and Statistics. Through surveying colleges, we realized many non-math majors would be required to take a Business Calculus or Applied Calculus course of some type, as well as a Statistics class. We felt that we could provide an alternative to Calculus in the senior year that would provide readiness skills for college Business Calculus.

The fact that more than 40% of our student population takes some type of calculus course before graduating from Stevenson High School, combined with extreme levels of success as evidenced by the AP exam results, as well as grade distributions and CRT results, is evidence that the shifts that have been made in this program are meeting student needs.

Science: The regular chemistry program began using ChemCom: Chemistry in the Community during the 1996-97 school year. Content is linked with real-life application and practice. We chose to teach this curriculum because we believed that students would benefit by being able to make more informed decisions as citizens and that it best addresses the needs of students who completed the natural science/biology curriculum during freshman and sophomore years. Our teachers met with teachers from other districts who were currently teaching the ChemCom curriculum and then received training through a ChemCom workshop to implement this curriculum. The reaction of teachers and students to the implementation of ChemCom has been extremely positive.

World History: World History is a course that well depicts what the social studies program at Stevenson High School is all about. All students in the school take the same course. There are no sections for accelerated or special education students. This course became a requirement for all students in 1992. While we continue to include more special needs students than any other core discipline, our World History students are extremely successful when their assessments are compared to those of other freshman courses. These gains have been encouraged by curricular improvements and modifications which include: building an exciting and relevant curriculum around the study of representative civilizations and recurring themes (in keeping with best practice mandated by the NCSS standards); making accommodations so that all students, including special education students, can access a challenging curriculum; integrating geographic literacy into the study of history; and working to develop more non-western themes and emphasizing the critical skills of reading, writing, and thinking.

Foreign Language: Spanish II Accelerated is the first course of the four-year sequence which prepares the student for the Spanish Language Advanced Placement examination taken in the senior year. The course is conducted almost exclusively in Spanish. In the spring of 1997, the Spanish II

Accelerated team members met with the Spanish III Accelerated teacher and the Advanced Placement teacher to articulate the curriculum across the sequence of these courses, so that students would receive all of the content and skill-building necessary to achieve success within each course and, ultimately, on the Advanced Placement test. One of the outcomes of this collaborative meeting was a realization by all teachers that the grammar component of the Spanish II Accelerated course needed to be strengthened. The teachers will incorporate items into the second semester 1997-98 CRT examination to reflect this change, and data on student mastery of the concepts will be available in the analysis of the items on the grammar subtest of the CRT. This curriculum change will then enable the Spanish III Accelerated team to move through the grammar component of their course at a less frenetic pace. Another outcome of this meeting was the teachers' insight that they needed to more closely articulate the cultural component of this four-

year sequence of courses, and both the Spanish II Accelerated team and the Spanish III Accelerated team undertook summer curriculum projects to facilitate this process. Yet a third outcome of this meeting was the teachers' commitment to continuing this collaborative model of curriculum redesign, and during the 1997-98 school year, an Advanced Placement Spanish team has been formed and has begun to meet. The team members will devote their meetings to curriculum realignment and, where necessary, curriculum redesign of the cultural and grammar components of the four courses. They are currently developing a common vocabulary to refer to grammar concepts so that students will have a sense of continuity in terminology used across their years of study.

Fine Arts: Stevenson will be offering a new course next year entitled: "Renaissance: A Fine Arts Survey." The course will be designed to introduce students to similar and distinctive qualities of the four major art forms. The overriding goal is to develop individuals who understand the role the arts have played and continue to play in the lives of human beings.

B6. How do you ensure that diverse learners (e.g., students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, limited English proficient students, migrant students, and students placed at risk) all have the opportunity to learn challenging course content and achieve at high levels?

Until the mid 1980's, Stevenson was dedicated to sorting and selecting students. Every entering student was placed into one of five different ability groups based upon his or her performance on a California Achievement Test (CAT) administered in the fall of eighth grade. Each member of the class was simply ranked based on the CAT score, and then artificial caps and quotas were applied to those rankings. School officials spent a good deal of time explaining to parents and students why they were not eligible to enroll in the courses and programs they desired. While it was theoretically possible to move to a higher level based upon performance, four of every five level changes that were initiated moved students to a lower level. An assignment to the remedial level was, in effect, a four-year sentence, a holding pen from which few students escaped. The assumption that guided this structure was that the best way to help students be successful was to place them in a program of appropriate rigor. If a student struggled with content or did not seem to have the ambition or self-discipline to be successful in the classes to which they were assigned, the response was to place them in classes more suitable to their abilities and dispositions.

A little more than a decade ago, Stevenson began to operate under a different set of assumptions and developed new policies more consistent with those assumptions. Locally developed proficiency examinations replaced the CAT test as the instrument for determining placement. Students were placed in courses on the basis of demonstrated proficiency rather than rankings, caps, and quotas. Pilot programs were initiated to see if students who historically had been assigned to remedial classes could be successful in the standard academic program. The success of these action research projects led the school to abandon remedial courses in favor of support programs that could help all students be successful in the standard program. A comparison of the percentage of students assigned to different level courses in 1986 and in 1997 is presented below:

<u>Course</u>	<u>1986</u>			<u>1997</u>		
	<u>Remedial</u>	<u>Regular</u>	<u>Honors</u>	<u>Remedial</u>	<u>Regular</u>	
<u>Honors</u>						
W.History	15%	85%	0	0	100%	0
U.S. History	13%	80%	7%	0	77%	23%

Government	15%	75%	10%	0	80%	20%
Frosh. English	21%	61%	18%	0	66%	34%
Soph. English	17%	65%	29%	0	68%	32%
Jr. English	14%	67%	19%	0	61%	39%
Science	10.4%	67%	23%	0	54%	46%
Mathematics	39%	36%	25%	12%	34%	54%

In the early 1990's, Stevenson began to experience a major influx of students with primary languages other than English. In 1988 the school began an ESL program with eight students enrolled in English classes. Today the enrollment stands at 102 and the program has expanded to include courses in reading, world history, and United States history. This program has been instrumental in helping students with language difficulties succeed in the core curriculum. The SHS ESL Department hosts spring articulation meetings with the sender school ESL teachers. The department has been trained to utilize the AT&T Simultaneous Translator Service, a system which enables school personnel to converse in real time with parents whose native language is not English. A faculty member serves as a Korean translator interpreter to help school personnel communicate with Korean-speaking parents and students. The ESL program has also produced a video to provide parents with a visual introduction to the school.

The artificial barriers that had prevented students from considering AP courses were removed and students were encouraged to consider AP courses. Enrollment in AP courses has exploded as shown in H3. The opportunity to engage in college-level work while in high school and to participate in academic competitions in virtually every area of the curriculum have given gifted students a program that can challenge their abilities.

In order to ensure that our special education population has an opportunity for success in Stevenson's regular education curriculum and access to challenging content, we have designed and implemented an extensive REI (regular education initiative) program throughout Stevenson High School. Each week, through a structured, organized communication system, special education staff members meet with every mainstream teacher to exchange specific information regarding the progress and individualized needs of all special education students in their classes. These meetings not only assess students' needs, but offer mainstream teachers strategies for course modifications, alternative assessments, or behavior management strategies which aid in helping certain special needs students to compete on an equal playing field with their regular education counterparts.

The REI program also offers avenues for teachers to obtain in-class assistance for laboratory assignments or complex units, and case conference management for specific students with behavioral and academic concerns. At the close of each school year, the Special Education Division conducts a survey of the Stevenson faculty to assess the year's REI activities. Through surveying, we gather data so that we can continually revise our program to meet our ever-changing needs. As a result of these surveys, the following changes and additions have occurred: the creation of special education liaisons to academic teams; the completion of "summer projects" which revise materials for specific academic courses; the revisions of procedures for exchanging information with mainstream staff; and the creation of a co-teaching mathematics classroom.

The changes described above were only possible because the faculty of Stevenson was willing and able to redefine the purpose and assumptions of their school. The success of this change initiative led Educational Leadership to feature Stevenson in its April, 1995 edition devoted to "Self-Renewing Schools."

C1. For three core subjects discussed in B2, what are the prevalent teaching practices and learning experiences in your school?

Mathematics: A primary teaching practice that has been used to develop a student engaged learning experience in our mathematics classrooms has been the use of “teams of four” to promote higher achievement and healthy social development simultaneously. Students in our mathematics classrooms are no longer organized in rows. Each room utilizes a seating format in which “teams of four” are organized in the classroom. Student teams are generally selected based on ability with one student from each quartile of ability level in the class. This structural change has allowed our mathematics teachers to shift towards classrooms as mathematical communities and away from classrooms as simply a collection of individuals. Furthermore, the mathematics curriculum uses an integrated approach. The textbook materials and teacher lessons are designed to foster student connections to social science, biology, chemistry, physics, and to other real-life applications that occur through the use of envisioning mathematics as a problem-solving model. Teachers in the department use whole group/small group instruction, a blend of teaching from the visual to the concrete, emphasize both calculator and non-calculator skills, and combine drill and skill with appropriate problem solving.

English: Curriculum and instruction in English reflect what we know about best practice in English/language arts. There are multiple modes of assessment as well as instruction. More engaging thematic units have replaced dry, academic chronologies. Students are involved in their own goal setting and assessment. The major areas of language arts are all addressed and integrated in ways which promote continual reinforcement and practice. Finally, a wide range of students experience the same curriculum, helping each other learn and learning from each other in a setting characterized by high expectations and rewards for academic success.

Science: Curriculum and instruction in science integrate other disciplines and skills. An emphasis on laboratory reports, essays, and written projects supports district goals in writing. Critical thinking is emphasized through the use of real-life problem solving. The inclusion of reading from science journals and popular press on science issues supports and advances the school’s initiative in the reading of non-fiction. Critical thinking is stressed in the presentation of real-life problem solving where students apply science concepts to environmental and ethical problems. The program has moved away from “cookbook” types of laboratories and challenges students to write their own experimental designs. Data collection and analysis have become more student-centered.

C2. Using the three courses from C1, why are the practices/experiences appropriate for your students?

Mathematics: Engaging every student in the discourse of the class represents a remarkable shift in the lesson planning mindset of our mathematics teachers. From the Research On Learning (Glasser), students learn 50% of what they see and hear and close to 95% of what they teach one another. Combined with the use of touring to check for student understanding, the “teams of four” concept allows teachers to maximize student discussion and long-term retention of information while receiving invaluable informal assessment information.

English: Engaging students should be the goal of all good instruction. The English curriculum is a model of this goal. It is more accessible and engaging and allows students to capitalize on their areas of interest and strengths. Units promote interactive learning and student-centered instruction, both of which are essential in a program that serves students of diverse abilities.

Science: All students may not choose a career in science, but they will all be called upon to read, write, think critically about the environment and ethics, and problem-solve. The science curriculum is helping students develop the skills they will need and uses content and strategies that stimulate the student engagement that is essential to developing these skills.

C3. In what ways do your teaching practices support student-initiated learning?

Student-initiated learning is prevalent throughout the curriculum. Students have latitude in determining and completing major assignments and projects in most courses for upperclassmen and are called upon to work together to accomplish major course objectives. Students design their own experiments in science. Math students not only work together in teams of four (see C1) but also engage in jigsaw activities that require students to teach new skills to their classmates. English classes use peer feedback as part of the standard writing process, and annually set goals for learning and self-assessment. Students develop individual and team projects in United States history that are submitted to state, regional, and national history fairs. In foreign language classes, students work together to create skits and videos and a cadre of ten teachers is currently implementing an action research project to utilize cooperative learning strategies in foreign language classrooms. Students select their own fitness activities in physical education classes (see B3). The fact that each classroom has direct access to the Internet has greatly facilitated teacher efforts to help students function as independent researchers and learners.

C4. As students and teachers engage in active learning, how are resources made available for gathering information and sharing the results of their work?

In the last three years, Stevenson has designed, installed, and implemented voice, video, and data networks which support and enhance an active learning environment. These networks provide for the free flow of information from in-house and outside resources.

The media retrieval system provides teachers and staff instant access to satellite and cable broadcasts, as well as over 3000 videotapes, laser discs, CD-I's, DVD's, and audio sources, from any classroom or auxiliary area. Due to the ease of the system, nearly every teacher has brought media into their classrooms, and on average sixty to seventy teachers use the system on any given day. Students may access the audio-visual collection at the media retrieval center or in the library and resource centers. Four days a week, Stevenson students produce, videotape, and edit a morning announcements program to better disseminate news and information to the Stevenson community. In addition, many students shoot and edit videos as part of class assignments. This is made possible through the training provided by the audio-visual department.

Computer Services is charged with actualizing the goal of information being available anytime to anybody, anywhere. To facilitate this goal Stevenson has 1000 computers connected to a switched 1 gigabyte backbone network offering cross-platform connectivity to resources via Apple's EtherTalk, Novell's IPX, IBM's SNA, and the Internet's TCP/IP protocols. There is a high-speed Internet connection for web, e-mail, and ftp resources. All 3300 students and 350 staff have e-mail accounts along with mail exploder lists on request. A CU-See-Me reflector for shared Internet video exists for teacher and student use. There are student and faculty servers allowing personalized storage and five web servers for faculty, administration, and student use on Macintosh, UNIX and Novell platforms with personal faculty pages, departmental pages, and club/activity pages beyond the regular school page. There is a minimum of one computer in each classroom, eight student labs, a staff development lab, two resource centers, and computer access in all departmental offices. Network access points for laptops and Apple eMate portable computers exist in departmental offices and resource centers. Teachers use a student management system which allows access to student data, attendance, and grade entry from the classroom. All of this is

managed and maintained by full-time support and repair staff, collaborative articulation committees with neighboring districts, and a full-time staff trainer.

The library supports the curriculum through twenty-three CD-ROM programs, the Internet, 29,871 titles or 34,616 volumes of books, plus newspapers, magazines and a picture and pamphlet file. There is an on-line encyclopedia available from the Stevenson home page plus the library book catalog is available there, making these available in all classrooms. The library home page has links pertaining to all of the main subjects being taught. These URLs are continually updated and expanded as worthy sites are found to provide more resources for an assignment. The library network will be available on all 1000 computers in the building during the 97-98 school year.

An average of nine classes per day is brought to the library to use the resources for class projects. We averaged nine classes per day last year. Students are taught the resources and researching skills they need to complete their assignments. Teachers are also provided with instruction in the research process and introduced to the various resources the library has to offer. An average of 97 books, magazines, or pamphlets is checked out daily. The library curriculum is constantly changing and improving to try to ensure that every student, upon graduation, has the necessary research skills to function in an information-saturated world.

C5. What questions about teaching and learning has the introduction of educational technologies raised in your school and how have you addressed them?

Some of the critical questions currently under consideration at Stevenson include:

1. What should all teachers know about and be able to do with technology?

This question was addressed by a Technology Task Force that was charged by the Board of Education to: (1) identify the prerequisite knowledge and skills that all teacher should be required to demonstrate, and (2) create assessment measures through which teachers could demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Its recommendations have guided the staff development program in technology.

2. What are the most effective methods for training staff in the use of technology?

It was agreed that the best strategy for training staff in technology was on-site training that offered courses, small-group instruction, and individual just-in-time training. Stevenson was then able to secure a grant that allowed it to create a staff development position within the school to train all staff in technology. This individual offers a variety of classes at specified times each week, but leaves time open for small group and individualized instruction. This just-in-time approach provides training when needed rather than in case it is needed and has been a major factor in the success of our staff development program.

3. What should all students know about and be able to do with technology?

During the fall of 1996, a Technology Task Force was established to identify and recommend specific steps that District 125 can initiate to advance the district goal: "Use technology to enhance teaching and learning and the effective operation of the school." As a part of their work, the Task Force identified the specific

knowledge and skills that all Stevenson students should be expected to demonstrate in the area of technology. These skills were classified into two categories: basic and core. The basic skills cover the areas of manipulation of the computer, keyboarding and terminology. The core skills cover word processing, database, spreadsheet, electronic communication, and research. In addition, it was the belief of the task force that these skills should be taught by integrating them into the curriculum rather than in isolation. It is through integration that technology can be used to enhance instruction and expand the limits of the existing curriculum.

4. What are effective ways to integrate technology into teaching and learning?

The goal of Stevenson's technology initiative is to impact teaching and learning. In order to further that goal, the Board of Education invited teachers to develop grant proposals for action research projects that incorporated technology into the curriculum. A committee of four teachers, a support staff member, two department directors, two Board members, and the principal reviewed each proposal and awarded over \$121,00 in grants to teams of teachers in technical drawing, graphic arts, government, environmental science, physics, and foreign language so that they could implement plans to make technology an integral part of instruction. The knowledge that is gained from these action research projects will be used to guide future efforts to integrate technology. The presence of over 1,000 computers in the school and the fact that there is at least one computer in every classroom have ensured that technology is accessible to all students. This year the school is engaged in a pilot project that provides special education students with E-Mates, portable computer devices that are assigned to specific students. Stevenson's work in technology has made it one of Apple Corporation's "Distinguished Schools." The school has served as the site of an ASCD National Conference on Technology and is featured in the ASCD video series on technology.

D1. How does the culture of your school support the learning of all its members?

Culture has been defined as the beliefs, assumptions, and norms that influence the day-to-day operation of an organization. Because these beliefs, assumptions, and norms are often unexamined, culture has also been referred to as "the way we do things around here." Stevenson's culture is characterized by the work ethic of its faculty and their commitment to collaboration, experimentation, and continuous improvement. Every teacher is a part of a collaborative team that works together to identify intended outcomes, discuss instructional strategies and materials, and develop common assessment strategies. The results of these assessments are collectively analyzed, areas needing improvement are identified, and strategies are developed. This systematic process of analysis, discussion, and planning for improvement is embedded in a teacher's life at Stevenson. It is simply "the way we do things around here." Teachers new to Stevenson consistently cite "opportunities for collaboration" as the biggest difference between their Stevenson experience and their experience at their former schools. The Board of Education has supported this collaboration by providing nine days each year that teachers can meet from 7:45 to 10:30 a.m. for staff development and/or collaboration. Teams can seek and are granted release time as needed in order to work on projects together. The district provided over \$40,000 to support teaching teams that worked on summer curriculum projects in 1997. The administration has made a concerted effort to provide teachers with common planning periods. In short, Stevenson does not just talk about the benefits of collaboration. It works to provide teachers with the time to do it.

Willingness to experiment is another defining characteristic of the Stevenson culture. While the faculty is slow to embrace the educational fad du jour, it has demonstrated a willingness to conduct action research that holds promise for advancing the school's goals. Many of the improvements that have been put in place since Stevenson won the Blue Ribbon Award in 1991 are the result of faculty initiatives and experiments. Teachers have proposed and developed 46 new courses and have played leadership roles in the creation of major new programs. This spirit of experimentation has been fostered by the Board of Education through

its Entrepreneurial Fund, a program that awards grants to teachers each year to support their school improvement proposals.

A powerful aspect of the Stevenson culture is its commitment to continuous improvement. Although the school has garnered a great many awards, it is characterized by a perpetual disquiet with the status quo and constantly seeks more effective ways to achieve its goals. This commitment to improvement is an outgrowth of the fact that Stevenson is data driven and results oriented. Indicators of achievement, participation, and student satisfaction are closely monitored. As the data of this application demonstrate, the trend in almost every indicator is upward. The school's annual goal setting process also contributes to the orientation toward continuous improvement. Goals are identified not only for the school, but also for each department within it. Furthermore, every staff member develops an individualized professional growth plan.

Students are also encouraged to be reflective and responsible learners. They develop four-year plans when they enter Stevenson and review and update those plans on an annual basis. They are required to write a reflective letter on their accomplishments in English each year. Finally, they are given a role within the Stevenson learning community. They participate in all school improvement task forces, are surveyed annually, and are provided with opportunities to propose how their school might be improved.

D2. How does your school foster a caring community with engaged, sustained relationships among all members?

a. What opportunities do students have to build sustained and caring relationships with teachers and other adults?

When the community made the decision to expand Stevenson High School, the faculty recognized the need to reinvent the school. When the new addition opened in 1995, Stevenson moved from a single school structure to the school-within-a school (SWS) or house concept. In many ways Stevenson operates as three schools of 1,100 students. Students are randomly assigned to one the three houses, each with its own faculty, counselors, deans, and social worker. Each house has students of all grades and abilities. Students pursue the core curriculum in their own house, but are able to attend any course that is not available in their house. They remain with the same student support team (counselor, dean, and social worker) for all four years of high school and siblings are assigned to the same support team so that parents can have an extended relationship with school personnel. Average class size remains small (approximately twenty students) to enable teachers to have a more personal relationship with students.

The Advisory Program described in A2 also fosters this personal relationship. The idea of expanding the advisory beyond freshman year has been proposed, but surveys of teachers and students consistently indicate that they do not feel an extension would be necessary or beneficial.

Students and parents who seek a more sustained relationship with teachers are invited to join the Stevenson Academy for Integrated Learning (SAIL). This elective program offers college-bound students the opportunity to join a cadre of classmates who will work with the same English, social studies, and science teacher for the first two years of high school. Students pursue an integrated, project-oriented curriculum in a three-hour block that teachers may schedule according to the needs of the activity. SAIL cadres operate, in effect, as a smaller school within the smaller school.

The myriad of clubs and activities also provides another avenue for sustained relationships between students and staff. Coaches and sponsors have a unique opportunity to demonstrate a personal interest in their students.

b. How does your school promote a healthy peer climate among students?

The Freshman Mentor Program (see A2) has redefined the relationship between upperclassmen and underclassmen. In many schools, the only attention a freshman is likely to receive from a junior or senior is negative - teasing, harassing, or bullying. The Freshman Mentor Program has created a climate in which every incoming freshman is able to establish a close, friendly relationship with an upperclassman. In fact, freshmen are more likely to seek the advice and council of their upperclassman mentors than their advisors or teachers on both academic and relationship issues.

The emphasis on cooperative learning has also fostered positive relationships between students. Students are unable to float through the school anonymously because they are constantly put into learning teams in their classrooms.

The World of Difference Program is one of the school's more recent strategies to promote positive relationships between students. This program is specifically designed to combat intolerance toward racial, religious, ethnic, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other forms of prejudice and discrimination. Twenty staff members have been certified as WOD trainers, and the entire staff has participated in WOD training exercises. The school is in the process of incorporating WOD lessons both in classes and advisories. Even in its early stages, the program has heightened awareness of the importance of treating others as we would like to be treated.

Stevenson's student population represents students from countries from all over the world. In 1997, over 500 students came from homes in which English was not the primary language. In order to help these students feel a part of the Stevenson family, faculty proposed a celebration of diversity through the International Fair, a two-day cultural event held early in the second semester. Countries from throughout the world are represented in booths which display a map and a flag, provide information about the history and culture, offer ethnic cuisine, and furnish workers who are knowledgeable about the country represented. To provide authenticity, booth workers wear native costumes. Entertainment is a highlight of the fair. This year's main features were the Korean Drum and Dance performers and the Sub-Continental Indian Dance Troop. The fair has become a much-anticipated event in the school and community.

D3. How is your school organized to reflect differing student needs within the school's goals, priorities, and curriculum?

Stevenson's commitment to detracking is explained in B6. There are no "tracks" and students are assigned to particular courses based on their ability and interest in that course. For example, a history buff may be assigned to standard English, mathematics, and science courses but may enroll in an AP history course. Remedial courses are virtually non-existent and "average" students are encouraged to stretch themselves and give challenging AP courses a try. Once they begin the course, they are given a full seven weeks to elect to move to the standard program. If students show particular promise in a course, they are encouraged to move to a more rigorous challenge. In the past five years, over 400 students have made upward level changes. At Stevenson, the master schedule is built on the basis of student requests. This means that every year the school must begin with a blank slate and construct a master schedule based on the courses that students select during registration. The schedule is driven by student requests rather than vice versa. Finally, Stevenson has made a major commitment to the regular education initiative for

students with special needs. Less than 1.5% of the credits that students earn at Stevenson are earned in special education courses.

D4. How are teachers hired in your school? How are teacher assignments made?

Each winter, the Director of Personnel works with the ten department chairpersons or “directors” to identify potential teaching vacancies. The directors are viewed as the primary leaders of their respective divisions and oversee the hiring, curriculum development, instruction, evaluation, and budgeting for their respective departments. The Director of Personnel solicits applications from throughout the country, using a proactive and aggressive process that results in over 3000 applicants per year. She then screens all applications and forwards the credentials of the most promising applicants to directors who review the credentials and arrange interviews with selected candidates. Some departments include faculty in the interview and orientation of candidates. If the director and faculty are favorably impressed by the interview, the director checks references and contacts. If the candidate holds a teaching position, the director makes arrangements to visit the teacher’s school in order to observe him or her in the classroom setting. If this is impossible, an attempt is made to have the teacher substitute in several classes at Stevenson so the director can observe his or her teaching and interactions with students. Finalists are then interviewed by the principal and superintendent. If the director, principal, and superintendent are in agreement, a job offer is extended.

Directors survey all teachers regarding teaching preferences prior to making assignments and are generally able to accommodate requests. All teachers are certified; all teach in their major areas of preparation; and 81% have advanced degrees.

D5. What constraints does your school face in creating a community of learners? How does your school maintain a safe, orderly, and drug-free environment?

The major obstacles Stevenson has confronted in its effort to create a learning community are related to its growth. We have faced the challenge of sustaining a commitment to the success of each student while our enrollment has doubled over the past ten years. We have met this challenge by expanding student support systems and hiring men and women who define their task as helping **all** students achieve at high levels rather than sorting and selecting students. We have faced the challenge of maintaining a collaborative culture while the size of the faculty has increased 100% and the expansion of facilities has separated departments. We have met this challenge by moving to houses, by creating teaching teams, and by providing more time for colleagues to work together. We have faced the challenge of ensuring that students remain connected to their teachers and school. We have met this challenge by maintaining small class sizes, developing the Advisory, Freshman Mentor and SAIL Programs, and expanding the Co-Curricular Program to ensure that every student has the opportunity to belong to a team, club, or group.

The maintenance of a safe, orderly, drug-free environment has complemented Stevenson’s effort to create a community of learners. The school has developed a system of graduated privileges that enables students to acquire more autonomy and responsibility as they advance through high school. Stevenson is able to advise students that if they observe the rules of the school and attend to their studies, they will receive steadily increasing privileges. Since freshmen benefit from considerable structure as they enter high school, they have virtually no free time during the school day. However, if they maintain reasonably good grades and avoid discipline problems, they earn a fifty-minute lunch period as sophomores. Juniors not only have the benefit of a fifty-minute lunch period, but also may elect to have one free period during the day at which time they are free to report to the student commons, resource centers, library, computer labs, or the campus grounds. Seniors have a fifty-minute lunch period, a free period, driving privileges, the ability to shorten

their school day, and permission to leave the campus when they are not assigned to a class. However, every student understands that the privileges that the school extends to them for good behavior and grades may be withdrawn if behavior begins to deteriorate or grades begin to slip. A senior who fails to observe the rules of the school runs the risk of losing all privileges and being assigned to a study hall with freshmen - a mortifying experience for a senior. Students work hard to obtain their privileges and the prospect of losing them is a more effective deterrent than more traditional disciplinary consequences such as detentions and suspensions.

Another factor that contributes to Stevenson's safe and orderly environment is the clarity of expectations and the level of student supervision. Every student is provided with a copy of the Stevenson Code of Conduct which articulates the rules of the school and the specific consequence for violating each rule. (The general principles that introduce the Code of Conduct were written by student representatives.) Students sign a statement acknowledging that they have received the Code and that they are responsible for knowing its contents. The Deans of Students then administer discipline according to the Code of Conduct. Students are advised of the rule that they violated; are provided with an opportunity to respond; are assigned a consequence; and are advised of the next consequence should they elect to break the rule again. This clarity of expectations and use of logical consequences has created an orderly, businesslike climate that is conducive to learning.

Stevenson has made a concerted effort to ensure that every student is aware of the dangers and consequences of substance abuse and to provide support for students who seek help with substance abuse problems (see A3). In fact, students must pass an examination on substance abuse in order to be eligible for a Stevenson diploma. However, the Student Code of Conduct makes it very clear that the school will not tolerate students who are in possession of or under the influence of alcohol or other illegal substances. A first offense results in a ten-day suspension that can be reduced if the student and his or her parents complete an extensive drug education program. Any second offense at any time during the four years the student is in high school results in an automatic recommendation to expel. In the spring of 1997, a task force was established to investigate the issue of substance abuse and to make recommendations to the School Board. This task force, made up largely of students, concluded that while substance abuse continues to be a problem in the community, there was little evidence of drugs or alcohol on the campus.

E1. What opportunities do teachers and other staff have to build professional communities that enhance their collective capacity to work together to support learning?

The basic building block of Stevenson's learning community is the team structure. Teachers work together in teams and are empowered to make every significant instructional decision - what is to be taught, how it is to be taught (instructional strategies), when it is to be taught (pacing and sequencing), materials with which it is taught, and how students are to be assessed. As a team they analyze evidence of student achievement, identify areas of concern, and develop strategies for improvement. As a team they pursue professional development initiatives in such areas as cooperative learning, authentic instruction, authentic assessment, or integration of technology. Members of the Student Services Department work together in teams to monitor the success of each student by implementing student support systems. The administration works as a leadership team that meets daily to consider ideas for improving the school. Teaching has been called "the lonely profession" and "the second most private act in which adults engage." But to be a

member of the faculty at Stevenson is to be a member of a collaborative team. This opportunity to work and learn together is embedded into the culture and the daily life of the school.

A professional community can also extend beyond the walls of a particular school, and Stevenson has made a concerted effort to encourage its members to be active participants in and contributors to their professional organizations. The district pays the dues of every faculty member who elects to join a professional organization, and virtually the entire faculty takes advantage of that opportunity. It supports teacher attendance at local and state conferences and funds their attendance at national conferences if they have been invited to make a presentation. The district supports professional development in other significant ways. It provides the technology and training that enable teachers to establish electronic collaboration with colleagues from around the country and around the world. It provides free lunches for teachers who participate in the Lunch and Learn Program, a series of meetings held over lunch periods to discuss topics dealing with study skills, curriculum, and instruction. It funds summer curriculum projects for curriculum teams and offers special grants for teaching teams that want to engage in action research. It allows teachers to propose and develop workshops to be presented for interested colleagues and provides salary schedule credit for those who complete the workshop. It publishes a professional journal so that teachers can share their writings with one another. In nominating Stevenson for the Blue Ribbon Award in 1991, the site visitor reported to the United States Department of Education that, "It would be difficult to imagine a more inviting teaching climate than at Stevenson." That statement continues to be true today. Last year the National Staff Development Council asked Stevenson's superintendent to author a quarterly column on "The School as a Learning Community" in the Journal of Staff Development because of the school's success in fostering that environment.

E2. How does a coherent approach to professional development for teachers and other staff ensure their ongoing learning? How do organizational arrangements such as time and teaching assignment, and school norms and culture make professional development a priority? Is there a long-term plan?

Teachers are able to choose from three different strands of staff development. The three strands continue for a minimum of three years to ensure the continuity that is important to acquiring new skills. Furthermore, since the training is intended to advance team goals as well as individual proficiencies, curriculum teams make a collective decision as to which strand to pursue. Thus, they are able to receive their training as a team and reinforce each other's efforts to put that training into practice. Recommendations for professional development strands are proposed by the Staff Development Committee that includes representatives from every department. The staff is surveyed regarding the recommendations, and the proposals that attract the greatest interest are offered. Currently strands are offered in student-centered instruction, authentic methods of learning, and alternative forms of assessment. The entire staff is also receiving training in technology as described in F5.

Another important opportunity for staff development is the University of Stevenson. This program allows individual or groups of teachers to propose topics for collective study and investigation. These proposals are transformed into course offerings, and if interest is sufficient, the courses are offered on the Stevenson campus after school, on weekends, or during the summer. Teachers receive one semester hour of credit on the salary schedule for each sixteen hours of course work completed.

The University of Stevenson concept will be expanded this year. The school is entering into a partnership with Barat College that will enable participants to receive graduate credit from Barat for the completion of University of Stevenson courses and to enroll in Barat's Master of Education courses on the Stevenson campus.

Attention to professional development is not limited to certified staff. Programs are also in place to assist support staff with their growth. In the 1997-98 school year, the support staff will be able to choose from over 30 classes designed to enhance their on-the-job skills. Staff development offerings are determined through a comprehensive yearly survey of all support staff members. Enhanced technology and communication skills are emphasized.

Stevenson is featured in the ASCD publication, A New Vision for Staff Development, because as ASCD writes, it is “at the forefront of the new staff development.”

E3. How does the school tailor professional development and support to take account of differences in career experience or professional responsibility?

Stevenson has an extensive program to assist new teachers in making the transition to the school. Every new staff member is provided a mentor who oversees the new employees' orientation to Stevenson. Mentors answer questions, offer advice, explain school procedures, and train new staff members in the evaluation model used by the school. New staff also have the benefit of two full days of orientation that focus on the history and culture of the school, a review of vision and value statements, case studies that enable staff to investigate collaboratively complex issues of teaching, and analysis of the curriculum they will teach. New staff members are asked to keep a journal of their experiences during the first year and are presented with articles, questions, and prompts to stimulate their thinking. Their journal reflections then become the basis for monthly meetings of the new teachers conducted by the principal and several faculty mentors. There is no question that new teachers appreciate and benefit from this support. In fact, when teachers appointed to tenure were asked to offer advice for new teachers, their most common response was to utilize their mentors. The school's evaluation process also provides a source of coaching for teachers new to Stevenson. Each is observed at least ten periods per year during their first two years at the school.

There are a variety of opportunities for veteran teachers to take on greater leadership roles that do not require them to leave the classroom. Many serve as mentor teachers. The current structure of the school includes 41 team leaders and eleven curriculum coordinators. Teachers are also able to play important leadership roles on the task force and committee structure that permeates the school. Finally, veteran teachers are encouraged to develop proposals for action research or other projects that they can substitute for the traditional evaluation process.

E4. How does your school use the processes and results of student assessment, staff evaluation, and school review to support professional growth? How has teacher professional development improved teaching?

Good teaching is preceded by planning and followed by reflection. Stevenson's clinical supervision model attempts to foster both planning and reflection. As the evaluation plan that was jointly developed by the faculty and administration states: “The teacher evaluation program of Stevenson High School is founded on the following basic assumptions:

1. The primary goal of the evaluation process is the improvement of instruction.
2. Most individuals want to improve their performance.
3. Objective feedback helps to improve performance.
4. Pervasive patterns of teaching can be identified.
5. When selected patterns of teaching are reinforced or changed, instruction can be improved.
6. Responsibility for improving instruction is shared by the observer and teacher.”

Tenured teachers are typically observed for three periods every other school year. Observations are preceded by a conference in which the teacher advises the observer of: the general area of study and how the unit of instruction aligns with course goals, the characteristics of the students, content objectives that explain what students are expected to learn, process objectives that explain what the students will be doing, any pre-assessment that has taken place to determine if students have the prerequisite knowledge and skills to master the objectives, strategies for formative and summative post-assessment, the instructional strategies and materials that will be used, and the type of feedback that would be most beneficial to the teacher.

During the observation, the observer is responsible for recording objective data about what is occurring in the class. In the post-observation conference, the observer and teacher collaboratively review the data and make additions or revisions as necessary, identify pervasive patterns of teaching, assess the patterns as to their effectiveness in helping students achieve the intended objectives, and discuss strategies for improving future instruction.

Veteran teachers who have been through this evaluation cycle several times are also encouraged to develop alternative approaches to evaluation that might include an action research project, investigation of an instructional topic, creating a cadre of teachers to participate in peer observation, writing an article for a professional journal, etc.

The evaluation process for non-teaching staff, such as counselors, asks them to reflect on each point of their job description and to identify improvement goals each year. Their self analysis of their performance on the elements of their job description and the achievement of their goals become the basis for their formal evaluation.

The best indicator of the impact of this process on teaching is the steadily improving indicators of achievement presented in section H. Another is the fact that for five consecutive years, Stevenson students have rated their satisfaction with instruction higher than any of over 25 leading high schools in the suburban Chicago area.

Stevenson celebrates good teaching in a variety of ways. At least twice each year, the principal presents plaques to teachers who have gone above and beyond the call in their efforts to help students succeed. This award, the "Super Pat," has been presented 303 times since 1991. The "Kudos Memorandum" is another of the school's strategies for recognizing outstanding teaching. Each spring seniors are asked to identify the teachers who had the greatest impact on them during high school and to elaborate on the reasons why. Their written responses are retained, and excerpts from those responses are published in a memorandum to the faculty every six weeks. Parents are also encouraged to advise the administration of exceptional teachers, and excerpts from their frequent cards and letters are also included in the "Kudos Memorandum." The school's parent magazine, The Minuteman, also highlights the achievements of teachers each month.

Finally, teachers are honored at the Senior Awards Night each spring. Any teacher who has won some form of external recognition from state, regional, or national professional organizations is presented with a Certificate of Recognition from the Board of Education. However, this external recognition is often granted for activities outside of the classroom. To ensure that classroom teaching is honored, the Board also presents a Certificate of Recognition to the fifteen or twenty teachers who were most frequently cited by students as having had a major impact upon them in the previous year.

F1. How does leadership move your school toward its vision? How is the instructional leadership role defined and implemented? What other leadership roles are considered important and how are these defined and carried out? How are resources aligned with goals?

The premise that guides Stevenson's approach to leadership is that it should be widely dispersed. The Board of Education is responsible for using consensus-building processes to develop a shared vision of what the school should strive to become as well as a strategic plan that specifies priorities and benchmarks. The administrative team is responsible for advancing that vision and implementing the strategic plan. The principal plays a pivotal role in this process. It is his job to act as the agent for the vision and priorities of the school and to communicate their importance throughout the organization. Thus, it is imperative that the principal functions as an effective leader. It is, however, neither possible nor desirable for the principal to control every aspect of the school. Thus, Stevenson's principal is considered a leader of leaders, and part of his job description requires him to develop the leadership of others. He is not expected to function as a problem solver as much as a problem definer, the person who raises the questions that give direction to others. He is assisted in this effort by an Assistant Principal for Curriculum and Instruction and an Assistant Principal for Administrative Operations.

A major portion of the directors' job descriptions is devoted to leadership and calls upon them to: operate from a sound knowledge base, develop a department vision statement and annual goals that align with the district's vision and priorities, communicate the school and department vision, and promote a positive climate within the department and school. The directors form a leadership team that meets daily under the direction of the principal to consider the operation of the school and how it can be improved.

Teachers also fill leadership positions as team leaders and curriculum coordinators as described in E3. Furthermore, every teacher is asked to fulfill the functions of a leader - to have a clear sense of what is to be accomplished, to communicate priorities, to inspire and motivate, to help others believe in themselves, to accept responsibility for results, and to pursue goals with tenacity and persistence. Great teachers are leaders. As Phil Schlechty writes, "Teachers absolutely must be viewed as leaders if schools are to operate as they should. Teachers are leaders of students."

The primary means that the school uses to focus resources on vision and goals is its attention to results. As Peter Drucker observes, "In most organizations, what gets monitored gets done." Each year the leadership team must present a series of reports to the Board of Education that addresses progress toward the vision and evidence of student achievement and satisfaction.

F2. Who participates in the leadership of your school? How does the school engage its internal and external stakeholders in leadership and decision making? What is the relationship between the principal and the stakeholders?

Stevenson has used a task force structure as a strategy for fostering involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process. Approximately every six years a task force of community members, Board members, administrators, staff, and students is convened to review the vision statement and strategic plan and identify necessary revisions. This, in turn, leads to a review of the existing conditions in the school in light of the new vision. Discrepancies between the ideals articulated in the vision statement and the actual conditions in the school are identified. The Board then creates a task force to investigate the discrepancies

and develop recommendations for improvement. Once again, these task forces almost invariably include Board representatives, community members, staff, and students and are typically led by a member of the administrative team (see I1).

The district also utilizes an Internal Communications Committee (ICC) that meets each month. Any employee in the school is able to propose a topic or question for the consideration of the ICC, and meetings are open to any interested staff. The superintendent, principal, two Board members, and representatives of the faculty and support staff form this committee. The Board also meets with specific departments four times each year to hear of the initiatives and concerns of those departments.

Teaching teams have played a major role in most of the innovations that have been undertaken at the school since 1991. They have been the primary source of ideas for new programs and courses. The district's flat administrative structure ensures that ideas for improvement are given consideration.

F3. What kind of school improvement process is in operation in your school? How was the Self-Assessment for the Blue Ribbon Schools Program developed and how did this initiative relate to other school improvement and planning efforts?

The school improvement process has been described throughout this document (see F2). The superintendent raised the issue of applying for the Blue Ribbon Schools Award with the Board of Education, administrative team, and Teachers' Association. Only after each group endorsed the idea of seeking the award did the self-assessment begin. Representatives from each department and representatives of the support staff met with the administrative team to review the self-assessment document and to brainstorm possible responses to each section. A draft of the completed document was then reviewed by the entire administrative team, representatives of student leaders, and a small editorial committee consisting of staff and administrators.

F4. How does your leadership use the most current information about education to promote continuous improvement in your school? How does such evidence influence decision-making?

Current information about education has at least two connotations: First, what is the current best thinking in the field, and second, what information is available regarding the performance of our own students? Stevenson's effort to ensure that its staff has access to current best thinking in their respective fields is addressed in section E. The results orientation of the school enables its members to stay focused on the achievement of Stevenson students. In every course teachers analyze their students' achievement on locally developed common, comprehensive assessments as part of the school's standard procedures. The principal and directors analyze student performance on state and national tests each year. The school conducts a telephone survey of a random sample of students one year and five years after they have graduated to determine their levels of success and their perceptions of the preparation they received in high school. One question drives the analysis of this data: "What can we do to improve the results we are achieving?" This constant focus on results and the steadily improving performance that it has produced helped to identify Stevenson as a model school in the 1996 book, Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement.

F5. What is your vision for integrating technology into your school, including benchmarks that guide your plans, problems that must be overcome, and training approaches? To what extent is technology used to improve management efficiency and effectiveness?

Stevenson's Vision for Educational Technology states: "District 125 believes that the AESHS community must be able to function in a rapidly changing technological and information based global society. Therefore, our students must know how to access, analyze, apply, and communicate information effectively. Furthermore, our students need a thorough understanding of technology's function, impact, and possibilities. Their school experience should demonstrate how technology permeates our lives by incorporating technology in teaching, learning, management, and the day-to-day operation of our school. To do this, students, staff, and parents need equitable access to and experience with available technology." (See C5 for a description of the technical capabilities we have put in place to meet this vision).

The technological classroom uses interactive videotape and videodisc, computer-assisted learning, electronic access to information, distance learning, audio visual aids, and hypermedia to create a learning environment that engages students. Technology can help teachers to respond to the different learning styles of students and to develop new attitudes toward learning, but only if it is integrated into curricula. Our goal is to help students regard technology not as a special event or an optional subject for some students, but rather as a part of the preferred learning process in and out of the classroom.

The Technology Plan approved by the Board of Education in the spring of 1995 set forth the vision and goals of technology for District 125. The plan included recommendations for phase one implementation while recognizing that the integration of technology would be an ongoing process. During the 1996-97 school year, a Technology Task Force was established to update the Technology Plan, review phase one implementation, and provide additional recommendations. Phase two implementation will be established during the fall of 1997.

The 1997-98 school year opened with a new student management system, SASIxp, through which teachers have access to student demographics, attendance, and grades in the classroom. SASIxp allows users to access all student information, singularly or collectively. This new tool allows teachers and administrators to input, develop, and analyze relevant data about the school and students.

F6. As you look back over the last five years, what conditions and/or changes have contributed most to the overall success of your school?

The passage of a building referendum in 1993, and resulting completion of a major construction project in 1995 have been instrumental in Stevenson's success. The district used a consensus building approach in examining alternative responses to growth. This process led a 23-member citizens committee to endorse a referendum unanimously to add facilities to the existing campus as the preferred alternative. A volunteer committee of over 500 individuals helped to win community support for that recommendation. A Transition Task Force then spent six months planning the implementation of the house structure. New facilities were opened in 1995 and, as a result, Stevenson has been able to focus on how students can best be taught rather than where we would teach them.

A second factor that has contributed to the success of the school in the past five years is a commitment to continuous improvement that has enabled it to redefine its structure and create new strategies for achieving its goals more effectively. The structure of the school has changed dramatically since 1991, but a culture that fosters collaboration and continuous improvement has remained constant.

A third factor in the school's success is the stability of its leadership. The officers of the Board of Education have held their positions for over a decade. The superintendent, principal, and majority of directors have been in the district for more than a decade. They have the benefit of a long-term view of the school's improvement process.

Perhaps most importantly, Stevenson has been able to attract outstanding men and women to its staff. The school's vision statement avers: "An exemplary school operates on the premise that a school can only be as good as the personnel that it employs." As a result, the district has been committed to attracting and retaining individuals with exceptional expertise in their respective fields and providing them with the training and support that enable them to continue to grow and learn. The Stevenson success story is the story of its people.

F7. What do you consider the major educational challenges your school must face over the next five years and how do you plan to address them?

Stevenson will continue to face the challenge and opportunities associated with growth. Enrollment will increase by approximately 33% in the next seven years. The passage of the referendum has enabled the district to build the facilities that will accommodate this growth, and the structure is in place to ensure that students will continue to be successful and involved in their school. While growing numbers will increase the complexity of the challenge, the history of Stevenson is the history of growth. Enrollment has increased in 32 of the 33 years the school has been in existence, yet all indicators of effectiveness have increased as well. We are confident of our ability to meet the needs of our students as their number increases.

A second major challenge will be the changing demographics of our student body. The homogeneous population that once characterized the school is becoming more diverse. Over 500 of our students now come from families where English is not the primary language spoken in their homes. The English as a Second Language Program has been developed to assist these students, but the school must be attentive to reaching out to them and their families in order to engage them in the full high school experience and to provide necessary support systems.

Finally, the school has identified academic goals that are more difficult to address and assess. The new vision statement calls for students to acquire "essential life skills" (see A1). While it is relatively easy to develop strategies to improve student performance on achievement tests in mathematics, it is much more complex to create strategies to foster these skills and to assess the impact of those strategies. Stevenson has been driven by a "whatever it takes" approach to helping students succeed. Now it must struggle with the issue of where the teacher's responsibility for learning ends and the student's begins. The Board, administration, and representatives of the staff met this summer to develop an action plan to attack this challenge. Our past success has led us to the point that we can now wrestle with the most complex issues of teaching and learning.

G1. What are the goals and priorities for your school, family, and community partnerships? How have your school and community improved as a result of these partnerships and how did you measure those improvements?

One goal of Stevenson's partnerships as spelled out in its vision statement is "developing the community's allegiance to and ownership in the school." The success of the referendum in 1993, in an era (and area) of taxpayer revolt, is an indication that this goal has been advanced. A second is to provide the "community with ready access to the school's resources and facilities." The school serves as a year-round community center that provides services to residents of all ages. Parents bring newborns to the infant swim classes and

their four and five-year olds to the full-time day care center. Elementary school children can spend their summers on the Stevenson campus exploring a variety of sports camps and fine arts programs, and their evenings participating in fast-paced classes for gifted students. College students take advantage of the fact that Stevenson serves as a satellite campus for the College of Lake County, the Lake County Multi-University Program, Barat College, and, effective in 1997, the University of Illinois. Sixty-three different community groups used the school's facilities in the 1996-97 school year alone, and the district offered adult recreational and educational programs on weekends, evenings, and summers that attracted over 3,500 participants last year. The Stevenson School-Community Foundation was established by residents in 1994 and has raised almost \$250,000 to further its mission of establishing a link between the school and community that is beneficial to both. A third goal is to establish partnerships with businesses that "reinforce the relevance of the academic and co-curricular programs and provide a direct link between the school and the workplace." A Business Advisory Committee has helped the school address this goal. The position of School-Business Liaison was created in July of 1997, and 29 different businesses have signed on to participate in the school's new Career Exploration Opportunities Program (see G4).

G2. How does your school involve families in their children's education?

Parents are communicated with on a regular basis. Every three weeks they receive either a progress report or report card advising them of their student's achievement. Each month they receive a school magazine that advises them of upcoming activities and features different aspects of the school. They are contacted on every disciplinary referral or unauthorized absence. They are invited to attend a variety of informational programs in a number of different venues - parent luncheons, neighborhood coffees, and evening programs at the school. The school's technology enables parents to leave voice mails, send and receive e-mails, and access the school's web page. Parents are invited to serve as volunteers; they have responded in such numbers that the school must hire a coordinator to link them to appropriate tasks.

Parents also have the opportunity to participate in traditional parent support groups. Over 90% of the parents of Stevenson students are members of the Patriot Parent Association (PPA). The PPA raises over \$35,000 a year to support the school and sponsors an annual Variety Show, one of the most anticipated events of the year. The Senior Parents Association hosts and funds the annual all-night Senior Party, another of the school's treasured traditions. Parents can join groups to support athletics and fine arts and are invited several times each year to participate on school-improvement task forces.

G3. How does the school support the needs and concerns of families?

See G1. The school also serves as the host of the Together We Can Program, a community initiative to address substance abuse. Two members of the Stevenson staff play important roles on the Together We Can Board. Stevenson's three full-time social workers link parents and students with community resources as needed.

G4. How does your school collaborate with community members and organizations for the benefit of families, students, and the school? From a reciprocal perspective, how do school community partnerships benefit the family?

Stevenson's collaborative efforts with the community are extensive. The Stevenson High School Community Foundation facilitates use of the school's facilities by the community and sponsors an annual fine arts series that is open to the community. The Career Exploration Opportunities Program links the school to the business community. The school has partnered with the local Rotary to establish an Interact Club that gives students the opportunity to participate in community service projects. It works with the

Council of Ministers to address issues of common concern, contracts with Omni Youth Services for social workers, has representatives on the board of the local Chamber of Commerce, and coordinates educational programs with local minority parent groups. Families also benefit from the tens of thousands of hours that Stevenson students donate to community service (see B1). Perhaps the best evidence that the community has benefited from these collaborative efforts is the inclusion of the Stevenson area in the book entitled, Fifty Fabulous Places to Raise Your Family. As the authors wrote, "The magnet that pulls people into the area is Stevenson High School...one of the top-rated in the state with a long list of awards and citations."

G5. How are educational resources in the school and community used to extend learning opportunities for students, teachers, and families?

The Stevenson facility virtually never closes. It is serving the community seven days each week. Monday through Saturday facilities open by 6:00 A.M. and typically won't close until after 10:00 P.M. Classrooms, laboratories, computer labs, and resource centers are in constant use throughout the high school or the college programs that it hosts. On Sundays, the school is a popular recreational facility that is open to the community.

Students have the benefit of school partnerships with schools in Germany, Japan, England, and

Costa Rica. The proximity of Chicago has enabled the school to establish exchanges with inner city high schools and to provide students with access to the city's extraordinary resources - museums, the Board of Trade, architecture, etc. Teachers have also arranged student trips to the world's most sophisticated cities and to its most spectacular natural wonders. It would be impossible for a student to take advantage of all of the opportunities that Stevenson High School affords.

H1. What is the overall philosophy and approach to assessment at your school? What are your assessment methods and how do these align with your educational mission and curriculum? Is there a balance among multiple methods? What questions about the assessment program is your school currently addressing as you seek continuous improvement?

Stevenson's assessment program is based on the belief that any single measure of assessment is inherently flawed in offering a comprehensive view of a student or school. As the 1992 Student Success Task Force argued, student success cannot be reduced to a single measure. Therefore, Stevenson monitors multiple indicators - assessment instruments developed at the local, state, and national levels; norm referenced and criterion referenced instruments; participation rates; satisfaction surveys; grade distributions, etc. The most pressing and complex question that the school is grappling with in the area of assessment is developing reliable and valid strategies to assess the essential life skills of using technology effectively; functioning as an independent learner; identifying, defining, and solving problems; establishing, pursuing, and achieving goals; accepting responsibility for personal success; and appreciating diversity.

H2. How do you use assessment results to understand and improve student and school performance? How does your use of assessment data contribute to making issues of quality part of the everyday conversation at your school? How does data influence decision making?

a. What assessment data do school administrators and teachers use on a regular and

systematic basis and for what purpose?

- b. What assessment data are communicated to parents and the community and for what purposes? What assessment data are communicated to students and how does the school ensure that students understand the standards by which their performance is judged?**
- c. What specific improvements have been made in school policies and practices as a result of your analysis and use of assessment data?**

Both the commitment to continuous improvement and the results orientation that characterize Stevenson require the ongoing collection and analysis of data. However, raw data are meaningless unless they are compared to standards, measured against internal or external benchmarks, or used to identify patterns and trends. Initially, Stevenson compared its data to state and national measures; however, the consistently high performance of its students has made comparisons to internal standards and other top performing high schools more relevant. As a member of a teaching team, each teacher is able to compare the performance of his or her students on comprehensive, locally developed tests to the performance of all other students who took the test that year. The teacher can see how his or her students compared to the total group on the total test, every subtest of the test, and each item of the test. The team compares the performance of their students on these comprehensive assessments to the performance of past Stevenson students, and then looks for ways to continue the upward trends. Counselors analyze trends in student satisfaction surveys and brainstorm how to raise them. The Athletic Department compares participation rates to standards established by the Board of Education. The administration compares achievement on state and nationally normed tests to the top performing high schools in Illinois.

The primary purpose of the assessment process is to inform practice so that the individual teachers and the school at large become increasingly more effective. Parents receive annual reports that compare student performance to state and national averages on norm referenced tests. They also receive periodic reports on general student achievement in the monthly parent magazine. These reports give parents information about general student performance. Of greater interest to individual parents are the progress reports and report cards that advise them of the achievement of their own children every three weeks.

Students are advised of the standards by which they will be judged in the course description that is distributed to each student in every class within the first few days of school. The course description includes the general goal of the course, the specific outcomes to be achieved, and the standards that must be met in order to earn particular grades.

The school's current initiative to improve student performance in reading serves as an example. Stevenson students score far above the national average on the reading section of the ACT, and their mean score on the state test in reading is 72 points higher than the state average. These data, examined in isolation, would not suggest a need for improvement. But analysis of the school's reading scores compared to five of the highest performing high schools in the state led to the conclusions that: (1) students weren't performing as well in reading as they were in other areas, and (2) reading requires additional emphasis in the school's curriculum and instruction. The English, Social Studies, and Science Departments have developed plans to address this concern.

H3. If your school administers standardized tests at the national, state, or district levels to students, what are the results of the grade levels tested for each of the past five years?

The Illinois Goal Assessment Program tests all sophomores and juniors except special education students whose IEP calls for their exemption. Stevenson students consistently score far above the state average and among the top ten districts in the state in each area of the exams.

IGAP SCORES--HISTORICAL SUMMARY

	1993	1994	1994	1995	1995	1996	1996	1997	1997
			State		State		State		State
<u>Grade 10</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Aver.</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Aver.</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Aver.</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Aver.</u>
Reading	308	313	244	315	237	283	223	280	208
Writing	29	29.7	25.3	29.8	26.2	29.0	25.7	29.6	26.1
Mathematics	337	347	254	349	259	354	262	352	264

Grade 11

Science	322	327	256	326	256	326	257	319	260
Social Science	310	314	245	321	248	321	245	317	245

ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM

Not only does Stevenson rank among the top schools in the world in terms of the number of students participating in the Advanced Placement Program; they consistently score far above national averages in the percentage of honor grades they receive.

<u>Course</u>	1993	%>3	1994	%>3	1995	%>3	1996	%>3	1997	%>3
U.S. History	109	74	131	70	138	69	151	79	146	89
Art History	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--	9	77
Art Studio-Drawing	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--
Art Studio-General	13	100	13	100	12	100	15	93	14	100
Biology 37	89	42	97	44	95	62	100	82	98	
Chemistry	29	68	36	88	46	73	102	68	82	63
Computer Science A	1	100	2	100	0	--	2	100	0	--
Computer Science AB	14	64	14	78	9	100	19	84	11	90
Economics-Micro	55	76	64	92	98	86	110	77	94	75
Economics-Macro	9	88	14	100	17	82	18	77	26	94
English Lang. & Comp.	63	87	59	93	68	85	77	100	54	94
English Lit. & Comp.	72	90	79	93	60	100	75	95	86	95
European History	93	84	106	87	114	94	104	95	126	94
French Language	3	66	7	14	7	57	5	100	4	75
<u>Course</u>	1993	%>3	1994	%>3	1995	%>3	1996	%>3	1997	%>3
French Literature	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--	1	100
German Language	1	100	5	80	7	28	2	50	3	33
Government-U.S. 91	85	88	86	103	77	106	85	89	91	

Govt.-Comparative	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--
Latin-Virgil	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--
Latin-Cat Horace	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--
Calculus AB	74	72	108	75	127	77	133	72	153	75
Calculus BC	51	100	51	100	61	100	108	91	97	94
Music Theory	0	--	0	--	12	50	13	38	11	54
Physics B	62	98	95	94	128	99	129	93	148	96
Physics C Mechanics	1	100	1	100	2	100	2	100	39	94
Physics C Elec. & Mag.	1	100	1	100	0	--	1	--	2	100
Psychology	0	--	42	90	23	82	33	93	46	95
Spanish Lang.	8	87	7	100	8	100	22	100	27	96
Spanish Lit.	0	--	3	100	0	--	0	--	0	--
Statistics (New for (1997)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	25	100

Total Exams	787		968		1084		1289		1375	
Total Students	373		490		555		599		656	
Yearly Mean Score	3.5		3.7		3.7		3.7		4.0	
Yearly Total % Honor Grades			84%		87%		85%		85%	
									88%	

H4. What are the results of nonstandardized, or alternative assessments of student performance developed at the school level?

Each department administers comprehensive, locally developed, criterion-referenced tests at the end of each semester. A comparison of student performance on these exams is presented below. Space does not allow for an explanation of all the alternative assessments done in the school.

Departmental Mean Scores

Subject	<u>Results</u>	
	1990	1997
Art	85.0%	86.0%
English	81.2%	77.8%
Math	66.0%	75.4%
Music	77.0%	83.0%
Science	68.8%	72.4%
Social Studies	80.0%	80.0%

H5. How do you ensure that all subgroups of students within your school achieve at high levels? What evidence is available of decreasing disparity among any subgroups in your school?

The non-Asian minority population, which represents only 3% of the school's total, earns grades and credits similar to the total school population. ESL students have been successful in non-ESL, core curriculum courses. During the 1996-97 school year, 62% of the grades earned by ESL students in science classes were A's or B's and only 3% were failing. In mathematics, ESL students earned 73% A's and B's and only 1% failed. The failure rate for these students is actually better than the total school population. Female and male students traditionally have scored comparably on nationally standardized tests. The significantly lower scores in math and science that often typify female students are not evident at Stevenson.

H6. For high schools only. How have your students performed on PSAT, SAT, and/or ACT college entrance exams over the past five years?

Over the past five years, the PSAT has been taken by an average of 51% of eligible students. During this time, student performance on this examination has produced 67 national merit semifinalists and 126 national merit commended scholars.

PSAT/NMSQT VERBAL SCORES

<u>Males</u>			<u>Females</u>		<u>Total</u>	<u>SHS</u>
<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>SHS-Mean</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>SHS-Mean</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Mean</u>
1996-1997	149	54.4	162	54.2	312	54.4
1995-1996	183	54.3	184	54.5	357	54.4
1994-1995	204	49.3	210	50.7	414	52.2
1993-1994	170	43.6	215	43.8	385	43.7
1992-1993	157	43.9	144	44.7	301	44.3
1991-1992	114	44.0	135	42.6	250	43.2
1996-1997 National Verbal Mean		48.2	1996-1997 Illinois Verbal Mean		48.3	
1995-1996 National Verbal Mean		48.7	1995-1996 Illinois Verbal Mean		48.6	
1994-1995 National Verbal Mean		48.8	1994-1995 Illinois Verbal Mean		48.9	

PSAT/NMSQT MATHEMATICAL SCORES

<u>Males</u>			<u>Females</u>		<u>Total</u>	<u>SHS</u>
<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>SHS-Mean</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>SHS-Mean</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Mean</u>
1996-1997	149	58.3	162	56.4	312	57.3
1995-1996	183	59.1	184	56.0	367	57.5
1994-1995	204	56.6	210	52.7	414	54.6
1993-1994	170	55.5	215	51.8	385	53.5
1992-1993	157	54.3	144	49.1	301	51.8
1991-1992	114	51.0	135	49.9	250	49.8
1996-1997 National Math Mean		49.2	1996-1997 Illinois Mathematical Mean		49.9	

1995-1996 National Math Mean	48.9	1995-1996 Illinois Mathematical mean	49.6
1994-1995 National Math Mean	47.9	1994-1995 Illinois Mathematical Mean	48.5

ACT SCORES

Student performance on the ACT exam has established a new school record for two consecutive years.

<u>% of Class</u>		<u>Science</u>		<u>SHS</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>National</u>
<u>Year</u>	<u>Participating</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Math Reading</u>	<u>Reasoning</u>	<u>Comp.</u>	<u>Comp.</u>
1996-97	90%	23.4	25.1	23.8	24.0	24.2
21.0						21.2
1995-96	92%	23.4	24.2	24.1	23.7	24.0
	22.8	23.9	23.4	23.5	23.5	21.2
1994-95	94%	22.8	23.9	23.4	23.5	21.1
	22.8	23.5	24.1	23.8	23.7	20.8
1993-94	91%	23.1	23.5	24.1	23.8	21.1
	23.1	23.5	24.1	23.8	23.7	20.8
1992-93	86%	22.4	23.3	23.5	23.2	21.0
	22.4	23.3	23.5	23.2	23.2	20.7
1991-92	91%	22.9	23.3	23.2	22.2	23.8
	22.9	23.3	23.2	22.2	23.8	20.9
						20.6

H7. What were the students who graduated in Spring 1996 doing as of September 1997?

High School: Graduating class size	<u>694</u>
Enrolled in 4-year college or university	<u>83%</u>
Enrolled in a community college	<u>11%</u>
Enrolled in vocational training	<u>.3%</u>
Found employment	<u>2%</u>
Other (travel, staying home, undecided)	<u>3%</u>

H8. What qualitative and quantitative evidence is available of effective overall school performance?

a. What was your school's record for the past five years in the following areas which may serve as quantitative indicators of school climate and engagement?

	Daily Attendance	Student Dropout	Teacher Attendance	Teacher Turnover
1996-97	95.7	.7%	n/a	2.9%
1995-96	95.3	1%	n/a	6.9%
1994-95	95.3	1.1%	n/a	5.1%
1993-94	94.6	.9%	n/a	6.2%
1992-93	95.3	.9%	n/a	6.0%

Teacher attendance rates are not maintained; however, teacher absenteeism is minimal. Last year 26 teachers had perfect attendance. Stevenson's tremendous growth over the past decade has led to a major

influx of young teachers, many of whom elect to start a family after teaching for a few years. If resignations due to maternity and transfer of spouse are deleted from the totals above, teacher turnover has averaged between 3% and 4% per year.

b. What are the results of any surveys conducted by the school to measure the school climate and/or stakeholder satisfaction?

Stevenson conducts an annual phone survey of randomly selected parents representing 15% of the freshman class. The survey concludes by asking the parents to indicate their overall impression of the school. Over the past four years 97% have responded “extremely favorable” or “favorable” and 3% have responded “unfavorable” or “extremely unfavorable.” The school monitors the student satisfaction survey that is included on the ACT exam and compares results with the other high performing high schools in the north suburban area. Stevenson students consistently rank quality of instruction, facilities, variety of courses, honors programs, library, and laboratory facilities higher than any other school in the study. Locally developed annual student satisfaction surveys are too extensive to report here but are available upon request.

c. What was your school’s record for the past five years in the areas of school safety, discipline and drug prevention.

Any student who engages in conduct that endangers others, or is in possession or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, is subject to an out-of-school suspension. The chart below provides a history of out-of-school suspensions. The data presented support the assertion that Stevenson’s reputation for providing a safe and orderly environment is warranted.

Behavior	96-97	95-96	94-95	93-94	92-93
Influence of alcohol	8 (.25%)	5 (.16%)	5 (.17%)	7 (.26%)	5 (.20%)
Influence of drugs	6 (.19%)	3 (.10%)	13 (.45%)	2 (.07%)	1 (.04%)
Possession of alcohol	4 (.12%)	4 (.13%)	1(.03%)	0	1 (.04%)
Possession of drugs	8 (.25%)	12(.40%)	17(.59%)	12(.45%)	5 (.20%)
Endangering others	7 (.22%)	8 (.27%)	11(.38%)	13 (.50%)	8 (.32%)

Data on the loss of privileges consequence (see D5) that is used for less serious offenses are presented below. Tardiness and unauthorized absences represent the majority of incidents.

Loss of Privileges	1577 (50%)	1133 (38%)	724 (25%)	1133 (43%)	945 (39%)
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H9. Which awards received by your school, staff, or students are most indicative of school success?

America’s Best High Schools: In 1992, 1994, and 1996, Redbook Magazine invited each state to nominate their award-winning high schools for a special program to recognize the top 100 high schools in America.

The magazine convened a blue ribbon panel of educators to assess each nominee. Stevenson was one of three Illinois high schools to be named all three times.

College Board Commendation: This fall the College Board commended Stevenson for ranking first in the Midwest and among the top ten schools in the world in student participation in the Advanced Placement Program; for producing more Advanced Placement Scholars than any school in the world; and for producing the highest performing African-American female student in the nation.

School Match Award: The “Bright Red Apple” Award is presented by School Match to schools that have the characteristics that “parents want most.” Approximately 10% of the high schools in the United States are designated for the award. Stevenson has received it each year for the past five years.

Illinois Alliance for Arts Education: The Illinois Alliance for Arts Education presented its School Recognition Award to the Board of Education for its extraordinary support of Stevenson’s Fine Arts Program. There are over 900 districts in the state; only one is recognized annually for this award.

The Burroughs Award: Stevenson's record of achievement and overall quality led the Illinois State Board of Education to present its award for the state’s Outstanding School Board President to Merv Roberts who has served as the President of Stevenson High School District 125 Board of Education since 1985.

Math Department: Stevenson's Mathematics Department was named one of the top twelve in the nation by the National Center for Research in Mathematical Science Education.

Those Who Excel More than 35 members of the Stevenson staff have won a “Those Who Excel” award from the Illinois State Board of Education since 1992.

- I1. What changes and improvements have taken place since the school was last recognized?

After considering Stevenson High School’s application for the 1991 Blue Ribbon Award, the USDE Review Panel asked its site visitation team to investigate the following question: “Is this school as good as it seems?” In his written report to the Review Panel, the head of the visitation team responded: “**Absolutely!** The combination of dedicated personnel and the emphasis on success combine to make this one of the best schools I have ever visited.” Yet a review of this application demonstrates that Stevenson has improved virtually every indicator of performance since 1991.

Stevenson's enrollment has increased by 58% (from 2,079 to 3,301) since the school was selected for the Blue Ribbon Award in 1991, an increase that presented the formidable challenge of building community consensus for the preferred response to that growth. An elaborate consensus-building process enabled the district to pass a referendum that has provided the facilities to accommodate the growth. The traditional high school structure that characterized Stevenson in 1991, has been replaced with a new structure that provides three smaller houses of 1,100 students, each with a comprehensive four-year program. This arrangement offers students the more intimate atmosphere of a smaller school, yet retains the opportunities of a large school. The Stevenson Academy for Integrated Learning (see D2) offers yet another smaller school within each house. Larger divisions were reconfigured and five new divisions were created (Fine Arts, Special Education, Science, Foreign Language, and Social Studies) to maintain effective management structures and to address new priorities. New leadership opportunities were created for teachers as team leaders and curriculum coordinators.

New support systems were created for students. An Advisory Program and the Freshmen Mentor Program were initiated to help students make the transition to high school. Centralized and enhanced tutorial centers were established and systems were put in place to ensure that students who were unable to meet the proficiency standards on any of the state achievement tests would receive extra assistance until they were able to do so. Systems were also put in place to ensure that students failing a course would receive extra tutorial assistance until their grades improved. The Student Services Department was reorganized into teams composed of a counselor, dean, and social worker who shared responsibility for and interest in the same group of students. The Guided Study and Mentor Programs were established to assist students who needed closer supervision, training in study skills, and a personal advocate in order to be successful. A regular education initiative has dramatically increased student access to the standard academic program.

Technology has become pervasive. Every classroom has direct access to the Internet and a direct connection to a sophisticated, centralized audio-visual system. The district has articulated the technology skills that all faculty are expected to acquire, and all teachers have committed to doing so. A full-time technology trainer has been added to the staff to provide teachers with on-site, on-demand training in technology. The Board of Education has established a grant program to fund teaching teams that develop promising strategies for integrating technology into the curriculum.

The school has expanded graduation requirements and created 47 new courses, including six AP courses. Interdisciplinary programs, which were non-existent in 1991, have been created through SAIL, American Studies, and Political Thought and Literature. Four new courses have been added to the curriculum to better address cultural diversity, and The World of Difference Program, International Student Program Fair, and three new school exchange programs with schools from around the world represent major initiatives to help students develop an appreciation of diversity. The Odyssey Program has helped to bring fine arts experiences to every student in the building.

The Co-Curricular Program has been expanded in all areas. Forty-two new clubs, six new sports, and 33 new athletic teams have been added. Student participation in community service, almost non-existent in 1991, is now available through a half-dozen different groups and results in tens of thousands of hours of student service to their community. Students are also more likely to help each other through programs like Freshman Mentor, Peer Tutors, Peer Mediators, and Peer Helpers.

The school has strengthened its link to the community with the creation of a School-Community Foundation, a Business Advisory Committee, and a major initiative to give students greater opportunities to

explore careers. A new, monthly parent magazine has been very effective in keeping the community apprised of programs, issues, and events at Stevenson.

Stevenson's commitment to continuous improvement is evidenced by the fact that the following task forces and committees have been convened since 1991 to develop recommendations and strategies for improvement: utilization of facilities, response to growth, differentiated staffing, student success, preparing students to live in a multi-cultural society, passage of the referendum, co-curricular activities, support staff, transition to the house structure, computer software conversion, security, student parking, technology plan, technology proficiency, long-range strategic plan, student support, student responsibility, guiding principles for faculty, guiding principles for support staff, guiding principles for students, guiding principles of the leadership team, discipline, business advisory, and essential life skills.

In 1991, the USDE visitation team wrote, "It cannot be emphasized enough that what is taking place at Stevenson is because of the people and their quest for excellence." In the final analysis, it is not programs or facilities that make a great school. It is people. While growth has presented challenges, it has also presented Stevenson with the opportunity to bring exceptional new teachers into the school to advance and contribute to its tradition of excellence.

Stevenson has not stood still. While much has changed, the people of Stevenson have remained committed to success for every student and the constant search for improvement. The result of that collective effort is that the school is unquestionably more effective today than ever.

I2. Have you had any interactions with other schools to share some of your successful strategies and practices?

Almost every week of the school year, Stevenson hosts visitors from around the state, nation, and world who are interested in exploring some aspect of its program. The school's strategies and practices have been featured recently in journals and books published by ASCD, NASSP, AASA, NSDC, the College Board, and the National Education Service. Since 1991, members of the Stevenson staff have made over 800 presentations on the school and its programs to educators throughout the United States as well as Canada, Europe, Japan, and Hong Kong. They have assisted state departments of education from around the country with improvement initiatives and have provided 10 different consultants for College Board seminars on implementing the AP Program. They have played a major leadership role in the Illinois initiative to adopt academic content standards and to reform the state's system of teacher preparation, licensing, induction, and ongoing professional development. They have chaired national and state conferences and accepted invitations to speak at the annual conferences of virtually every major national professional organization. They have provided materials for anyone who has sought them. Furthermore, the school has hosted site visits from over 220 schools and will host 22 student teachers in the 1997-98 school year.

Stevenson's assistance to Carl Sandburg High School during the 1996-97 school year illustrates the school's willingness to share its ideas with others. Stevenson's superintendent accepted an invitation to explain the school's approach to curriculum monitoring to Sandburg's administrative team. He then agreed to address the entire faculty on the subject. Next, Stevenson hosted a team of teachers from Sandburg who wanted to examine the process at work and discuss it with Stevenson teachers. They were given course descriptions and common comprehensive assessments developed by the Stevenson faculty. The visitors met with teachers from their fields as well as the entire Stevenson administrative team. Then several teachers from Stevenson spent a day at Sandburg answering teacher questions and explaining the benefits of the

curriculum monitoring model. At the end of the year, Sandburg's principal attributed the progress his school had made to the assistance it had received from Stevenson.

The Board of Education has explicitly stated that Stevenson should serve as a model to others. In helping other schools and encouraging staff members to play a leadership role within their profession, Stevenson is advancing its own vision of becoming a school that others look to for assistance.

J1. Arts Education

a. Curriculum & Instruction:

In 1992, Stevenson High School was administratively reorganized to create a Division of Fine Arts. Four departments that had functioned in isolation and had existed in three other divisions were brought together to formulate the Fine Arts Program. The four departments were art, dance, music and theatre. At that time, the Fine Arts Division offered 36 courses and sponsored ten after school activities, not including six theatrical productions. In 1997, the Fine Arts Division offers 47 courses and sponsors seventeen after-school activities, not including nine theatrical opportunities. These additions represent a 24% increase in course work and a 39% increase in co-curricular activities since 1992. Examples of new courses include AP Art History, Classical Guitar, Music History, and Writing for Theatre. Examples of new co-curricular opportunities include Gallery Club, Repertory Dance Company, Playwrights Club, Stagecrafters, and Guitar Club.

The activities in the art classes are designed to develop skills of perception, understanding, and individual expression. Courses include a foundation program (Art Form 1 & 2), Computer Art, Photography, Ceramics, Printmaking, Sculpture, Drawing and Design, Painting, Commercial Art, Jewelry and Metal Design, Studio Art, Advanced Placement Art, and Advanced Placement Art History. All courses include critical and historical readings and examinations.

Theatre classes at Stevenson feature a sequential and cumulative curriculum which allows students to develop internal and external resources, explore creative potential, investigate the social and historical context in which they live, form aesthetic judgments, and experience the discipline of the artist. The courses are process oriented, primarily concerned with the integrity of the student's work.

Stevenson provides dance as a creative and rewarding art experience where artistic integrity and appreciation are developed. Students are provided opportunities to develop body strength, agility, coordination, creative problem-solving skills, self-discipline, organizational skills, and the ability to work effectively in cooperative learning groups. There are four instructional levels available for appropriate placement.

The Stevenson Music Department offers a variety of classes that allow students to continue, or begin, a strong, sequential program of vocal and/or instrumental music study. Courses include three levels of band, four choral ensembles, an orchestral program, beginning electronic piano, guitar, music history, music theory, and composing and arranging. In all cases, students are provided opportunities to display their accomplishments through concerts, parades, festivals, musical stage shows, and small ensemble experiences.

In addition to the art, dance, music and theatre opportunities available, there are also courses and after school activities dealing with creative writing, poetry, media analysis, technical drawing, and the design

arts that are available through the Divisions of Communication Arts and Applied Arts. In total, there is a broad range of arts experiences, organized from beginning to advanced levels of instruction, available to all of the students.

In the fine arts in particular, there have been improvements made in the curriculum regarding the study of history and criticism, as well as the interrelationships of the arts among themselves and with other academic disciplines. For example, one course is available that focuses exclusively on Musical Theatre. There have also been collaborative efforts to use creative dramatics and art history in social studies and English classes.

At Stevenson, the arts are serious and rigorous academic subjects that engage students in learning activities that require the use of higher-order thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The arts also emphasize the importance of involvement in one's own learning. The faculty is committed to helping each student gain skills and knowledge on a daily basis. While others in the school and community only view the results of these efforts at the concerts, exhibits, and theatrical productions, it is the on-going process of learning, creative expression, and self-reflection that is the core of an education in the arts at Stevenson.

b. Commitment & School Environment:

The addition of facilities to accommodate the growth of the student population included a major expansion for the fine arts, namely, the construction of a 1200 seat Performing Arts Center. This center was designed to function for both classroom and presentation spaces. It is comprised of three stages that can be used for teaching and learning as well as for performances. Approximately 40% of the seats in the main house are located on turntables that allow these seats to turn and face two smaller stages. This creative design allows for great flexibility in delivering instruction and accommodating other needs in the school such as assemblies and special programs.

The addition also included two new art studios and a multi-purpose space for dance classes.

In total, there are six art rooms, a photography lab/classroom, one dance studio, an auxiliary dance space, a choral room, a band room, nine music practice rooms, a 550 seat auditorium whose stage is the home of the orchestra, and four theatre/music spaces. These spaces are a studio theatre of 150 seats, a recital hall of 250 seats, a little theatre of 250 seats, and a main stage of 1200 seats. These facilities provide ample resources to prepare and present student learning in the arts.

The fine arts faculty is comprised of nine art, three dance, four music and three theatre teachers. The performing arts faculty is assisted by a technical director with an MFA in Theatre Design. The Director of Fine Arts also teaches one class of AP Art History.

The teachers provide high-quality instruction in their specialized fields. Many of them continue to pursue their own artistic development. Three of the music faculty perform in established ensembles. Two of the dance instructors regularly perform for Chicago-based companies. Five of the art teachers continue to produce and exhibit their own work. One of the theatre faculty is an award-winning playwright whose scripts have been produced in Chicago, New York, and

Los Angeles. The director of the orchestra has published two nationally distributed books on rhythm instruction.

These outstanding teachers work diligently on behalf of the students and in so doing involve families in a variety of ways. The Band/Colorguard Parent Association includes over forty hard-working parents who spearhead fundraising activities. Parents also form the Choral Guild and the Orchestra Parents Organization. These volunteers assist in special events and travel activities to such places as Washington, D.C., and London, England. These involved parents are a big asset to the overall success of the program.

The Board of Education has demonstrated its commitment to the arts by providing the financial support to employ exceptional teachers, equip outstanding facilities, and supply the appropriate resources to insure equity with the other educational programs. This support is clearly demonstrated in the 1997-98 summary budgets that follow:

Fine Arts administration	-	171,772.00
Art	-	600,912.00
Dance	-	119,373.00
Instrumental Music	-	296,111.00
Vocal Music	-	78,796.00
Theatre	-	327,460.00
Total	-	1,594,424.00

c. Indicators of Success:

Success begins at Stevenson with the teachers establishing significant objectives for the students. The objectives are designed to challenge the students to achieve their potential in each field of study. In line with the objectives, the teachers have articulated performance standards for all of the major units of instruction that allow the students to know how well they are progressing. At the end of each semester, there are written examinations as well as performance-based assessments established for every course. The results of these examinations and performances are used by the faculty to refine curricular decisions and to modify instructional practices.

Examples of the performance-based assessments include three theatrical productions that conclude three courses of study. These courses are Contemporary Drama Workshop and Musical Theatre during the fall term, and Classical Drama Workshop in the spring. The students participate in a “live” presentation to their families, friends, and interested community members.

In addition to these end-of-semester assessments, there are on going opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning and skill development. For example, during the current school year the students will perform in five band concerts, five orchestra concerts, five choral concerts, two dance concerts, two guitar recitals, and six theatrical productions. The work produced in art classes is showcased throughout the year in twelve exhibit sites around the school as well as four major art shows at the end of the school year. These numerous activities provide the faculty opportunities to assess student performance in the classroom prior to a public recognition of their engagement with the arts instruction.

d. Partnerships:

There are many partnerships that can be described in this section, but only two will be highlighted. The first partnership concerns the strong ties that Stevenson has with the districts that send their students to us. These ties are extremely strong in the fine arts. For example, we will be hosting ten musical concerts of junior high students during the year. Also, there are combined junior high and senior high band and choral

concerts that occur annually. Further, there is an annual art exhibit that showcases the artwork of more than 1,000 students in grades K-12 from seventeen schools, including Stevenson.

The second partnership that has had a great impact on arts education at Stevenson is “Odyssey,” an all-school fine arts festival, that occurs every two years during two days in January. Every student selects eight different experiences from a selection of more than 300 hands-on workshops, demonstrations, recitals, professional performances, plays, and concerts. During the inaugural “Odyssey” in 1996, the students were able to attend performances by the Joffrey Ballet and the legendary Maynard Ferguson.

“Odyssey” connects Stevenson with many of the cultural organizations and arts institutions in the greater Chicago area. It also connects Stevenson with many community members who no longer have children at home. Many of the over 200 volunteers who help create “Odyssey” are people who want the arts to be an important dimension in the education of the youth in their towns. The school greatly benefits from their enthusiastic involvement.